# Redefined Selves

## Individuality and Community in Post-Bubble Japan

# 改造された自己

## バブル後日本の個性と共同体性

Guy McCreery. Ph.D Thesis. University of London. School of Oriental & African Studies.

November 1998



ProQuest LLC.
789 East Eisenhower Parkway
P.O. Box 1346
Ann Arbor, MI 48106 – 1346

## Abstract

The research was conducted between August 1993 - June 1996 in Tokyo

The research tests the ubiquity of an emerging individualism in Japan in the aftermath of the speculative Bubble collapse. The thesis seeks to demonstrate that an individualism is emerging in Japan and being legitimated in two complementary dynamic processes. One is a 'top-down' process whereby individuality is being engendered, legitimated and institutionalized through planned company organisational restructuring. The other is a 'bottom-up' process where increasing unemployment and a burgeoning flexible economy requires individuals to show initiative and independence. Both these processes can be seen to be occurring against a general trend of 'individuation' (Dore 1992) which has gathered momentum since the oil crises of 1973 and 1974 (Sengoku 1991). In both cases, the emergence of this individualism is plotted by focusing primarily on the economically driven changes between those ethics and practices generally regarded as typical of 'the group model of Japanese society', as described by Nakane (1970) and critiqued by Befu (1980a, 1980b, 1990), and those ethics and practices emerging to characterize what I term a 'new individualism'.

Through an ethnographic analysis of two case studies: one a software company, to study the 'top-down' process, the other among people who attend Techno music parties, to study the 'bottom-up' process, it emerged that a primary ethic of 'group models of Japanese society' (Befu 1980b, 1990) is that the individual self should 'suppress itself' or 'deny itself', and conform to uniform standards of thought and behaviour set at the collective level. This was in marked contrast to the ethics and practice of the two case studies, where the individual self is expected to 'express itself'. This 'redefinition' of the individual self engenders and is engendered by a complementary redefinition of ethics and practice at the collective level, where the requirement to conform to particular uniform sets of standards for thought and action associated with group models of Japanese society, are absent.

In order to apprehend changes to the self at the individual and collective level, the little understood concepts of *seken* and *sekentei* were used. The research demonstrates that *seken* is the moral framework of 'the group model of Japanese society', while *sekentei* is the 'public self' of this model of society, and that, as individuality emerges and becomes legitimated within society as a whole, *seken* and *sekentei*, and associated situational ethics and 'multiple' senses of the individual self associated with these concepts, lose their moral and social legitimacy, giving way to a unified sense of self within a single, nuanced, universal public domain.

The research also demonstrates that this new individualism is not primarily a colonization by Western individualism, but is an identifiably Japanese individualism grounded in well-documented aspects of the Japanese self and Japanese society, and best understood as a departure from, and redefinition of these aspects of the Japanese self and of Japanese society.

## Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the following in particular, without whom this thesis would not have been possible: University of London, SOAS Japanese Department, especially Dr. Stephan Kaiser and Dr. John Breen. Professor Katsuaki Tōgō, Sanwa Bank Foundation, Kōdansha Ltd, Mr. Tony Smyth, Mr. Tsukasa Takehara. Everyone at Connected and all the Japanese Techno community. I would also like to thank: Yoshikyo and Makiko Nakanishi, Masahiro Tōgō, Tetsuya Noguchi, Koichiro Yamada, Mrs. Yoshine and all at Yoshine Shōten, Dr. Dolores Martinez, Professor Takie Lebra, and Professor Masao Yamaguchi, Ms. Yuka Yokozawa, Ms. Rika Matsubara, and everyone at the Japan Foundation London Language Centre. Finally I would like to thank my wife and family for their help, support, and encouragement.

In Memory of

Dr. Khalid M. Basra
Friend and Fellow Anthropologist

**Transcription of Japanese language.** The Japanese long 'o' is written as *ō*, and the long 'u' as *uu*.

**Japanese Names**. Where both family name and given name are written, the family name is written first.

## Contents

# Introduction

This thesis was conceived and designed while undertaking fieldwork for a thesis on the representation of ethics and aesthetics in *manga* (Japanese comics) between 1993 and 1994. After one year in the field, and after considerable angst, I decided that it was unrealistic to talk about representations of Japan when I had not spent enough time there getting to know the country and its people first. I decided to stay on in Japan and attempt another research project. Being there while the economic speculative bubble[1] economy was imploding, while the U.S-Japan Bi-lateral trade talks were failing, and during the rice shortage, had all provided me with an array of perspectives on a society undergoing a period of heightened spontaneous reaction and self-reflection at a mass collective level, in the face of events, which I felt would provide me with a research subject.

The thesis grew out of a recognition on my part, that with the collapse of the Bubble in the early part of 1991, Japan was entering a new period in its history. This was hinted at in the events that were rapidly unfolding as the Bubble economy began to implode. However, recognition that an era had ended did not begin to materialize until the end of 1993 and the early part of 1994, when, with the recession still deepening after two years instead of passing as expected, the Japanese press began to talk of the end of *sengo jidai* (the Post-WWII Period). The collapse of the Bubble in 1991 proved to be the event in the minds of the Japanese people, rather than the fiftieth anniversary of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1995, which ended the post-war era. During the period 1991 to 1995, as the Japanese people became aware that it looked as though recent events were marking the end of an era, they looked to the fiftieth anniversary of the bombing of Nagasaki and Hiroshima in 1995 to mark the beginning of a new era of prosperity and hope. In the end, the debacle surrounding the Diet[2] resolution for an official Government apology for a war of aggression in Asia overshadowed the marking of the fiftieth anniversary of the bombing, and dampened hopes for a new era of harmony and prosperity. I also heard comments from Japanese that in addition to the revelations of 'impropriety' revealed by the collapse of the Bubble, some people interpreted the rice shortage in 1994, the earthquake in the Kansai area in January 1995, and the gas attack on the Tokyo subway by the religious cult *Aum Shinrykyō* in March 1995, as events of ill-omen which not only closed a period of prosperity and hope, but which also signalled the beginning of a period of uncertainty and hardship. I heard one person wryly comment that the series of misfortunes marked the beginning of Japan's disappearance beneath the waves of the Pacific, as predicted in mythology.

[1]Hereinafter referred to as 'the Bubble (*baburu*)', the term normally used by Japanese
[2]The Japanese Parliament

Early in my fieldwork for the other thesis, in the Spring of 1993, I realised that the bursting of the Bubble and the ensuing recession was having a significant effect on the way the Japanese thought about themselves and the rest of the world. I had been in Japan in early 1991, just at the peak of the Bubble, and I had heard Japanese say how many people thought the nation's staggering economic success was a direct result of, and proved, their specialness and their uniqueness as a people. In the euphoria created by the Bubble, many Japanese saw the economic boom to be the final proof that everything they had been saying about Japan's uniqueness was true. The bursting of the Bubble and the subsequent recession, however, provided the sobering evidence for millions of Japanese that they are very much like everybody else. The psychological impact of this should not be downplayed. For many Japanese, the late 1980s was the time when Japan became No.1. The economy had been growing steadily since the end of WWII, and, swept up in the euphoria on the back of the speculative bubble, the opinion in the country was that the Japanese economy was immune to the ups and downs of capitalist economies in other parts of the world, due to the uniqueness of 'Japanese Capitalism' (Sakakibara 1993). National confidence was very high, bordering on the arrogant, and the Bubble crash and the recession brought everybody down to earth with a bump. As the dust settled, the realisation dawned for many Japanese that Japan is not immune to the fates and tides which govern the lives of other nations, but that we are all intimately tied together and dependent on each other, and increasingly so.

In addition to an awareness of the interdependency of the world's nations and peoples, came a sense of vulnerability and fragility, not only as a result of the awareness that Japan depends on other nations, economically, but from something much closer to home. The revelations that the securities industry was compensating the losses of favoured clients during the crash, when millions of ordinary Japanese lost their life savings and their pensions, with the added injury that the government decided to bail out ailing financial institutions hit by the crash, while refusing to compensate members of the general public, was a watershed point because it left many feeling disillusioned and mistrustful of their institutions and their government. The pitiful response of the government to the Kansai earthquake only served to deepen that sentiment. The practices exposed by the collapse of the Bubble and the ensuing 'scandals' followed the Recruit scandal in 1989, and other revelations of bid-rigging between government ministers and construction companies. Many people lost confidence in public figures after the Recruit scandal (Kent 1992; Ijiri 1993), which was then exacerbated by events leading up to and causing the collapse of the Bubble (Okumura 1991; Uekusa 1991; Shimada 1991; and others).

The levels of secrecy and lack of accountability which resulted from the relationship between corporations, the bureaucracy, and government over the post-WWII period, has led many to doubt the whole of the political and economic establishment. This was against a background of falling real wages during the Bubble period. In the period 1986-90 alone, following a trend since the mid-1970s, labour productivity increased by 33.9%, while real wages increased by only 8.7% (Itoh 1994). The cumulative effect of all these events reinforced the opinion among the vast majority of the Japanese people that they were being exploited, and that the real winners from Japan's economic success were politicians and corporations, not individuals (Arai 1992; Itoh 1994; Kogura 1995). In the

wake of the Bubble collapse, corporations were increasingly perceived by ordinary Japanese as an enemy of the people rather than the protectors and benefactors of the people; a remarkable change of attitude in a short time. The relationship between government, the bureaucracy, and big industry that was exposed by the collapse, together with the response of government to the revelations of financial institutions compensating favoured clients, strongly suggested that the custodians of the 'public domain (*ōyake*)', the government, were only protecting their factional interests, not the interests of those who actually occupy the public domain, whom they are constitutionally mandated to protect: ordinary people. But although certain institutions and individuals had acted outside the law, what was perceived by the majority to be unfairness and malpractice was engendered by the structure of those institutions and by the structure and morality of society as a whole. Although there were cases of malpractice, much of what is regarded by Japanese and foreigners as corruption or deviation from accepted practice, was not corruption or deviation in the majority of examples, but was long-standing accepted practice and was a case of 'business as usual'.

The structure and morality of *ōyake* explains how the practice of compensating favoured clients and the practice of hiding losses developed, and why it was regarded as acceptable. So acceptable in fact, that the most recent evidence confirms what was suspected at the time of the collapse of the Bubble: that not only did the Ministry of Finance know about these practices, they were actually advising financial institutions on how to hide their losses. Revelations like this elicit the response of 'institutionalized corruption', but this is not entirely the case. These practices are only regarded as 'corrupt' under rules and ethics which accord with business practices in the U.S. and Europe, and other countries which follow those rules, and under a morality that privileges individual's rights and provides a strong public domain to protect those rights. These practices are not corrupt, or unusual, when considered against a morality and structuring of society that existed in Japan prior to the Meiji Period (1868-1912), and which has continued to flourish in the modern era. The Meiji Government adopted structures and ethics as enshrined in the concept of a civil society, imported from Europe and the U.S. However, the concepts of individual rights and a public domain did not exist in Japan prior to this time. A different morality and structuration of society existed, which privileged interest groups over individuals, and which mitigated against the establishment of a strong public domain. It is the conflict between these two moralities, and between these two types of society, that explains why practices that had been in place for at least fifty years were suddenly regarded as corrupt, when previously they had not been regarded as such. These points are essential to understand what is currently happening in Japan, and to understand what the consequences are likely to be in the next ten to twenty years.

The exposure of fundamental structural and moral incommensurabilities within Japanese society has certainly provided an impetus for the proper establishment of individual rights and a strong public domain as the basis for the continued development of Japan as an economic superpower, and as a more integrated member of the global community. However, the most powerful engine of change is undoubtedly economic. It is likely that the Japanese economy would have entered a period of slow economic growth and possibly recession in the first half of the 1990s anyway. Events and developments in both the domestic, regional and global economy, all of them

related, conspired to put considerable pressure on Japan to make changes to industrial practices, but which have now been given an added impetus, and a moral dimension, by the clashing of inimical moralities and identities. On a global level, during the early 1990s, there was virtual stagnation in the mature capitalist economies. On a regional level, until 1997, the opposite was true. Before the current monetary crises in a number of the South East Asian economies, Japan watched its neighbours achieve economic growth rates similar to those achieved by Japan during the period of high economic growth (*kōdo seichō ki*) in the 1950s and 1960s. In the period 1992/3, the nations of the G7 achieved growth rates with an average of 1.5 percent, while the newly industrialised economies (NIE's) in Asia, during the same period, achieved growth rates with an average of eight percent (Makino 1995), and China in the first half of 1997 achieved a growth rate of 9.6 percent (Financial Times 24/7/97). Japan is very much involved and increasingly dependent on these economies, by providing technology, through licensing agreements, and by direct investment. Before the current situation in East Asia, it was generally regarded that many of these 'tiger economies' would rapidly catch up and overtake Japan and the other advanced industrial nations in many of these industries (Makino 1995), as these NIE's were already taking over 'low technology' global markets, such as household appliances, TV's and other electronic goods. As things stand in the middle of 1998, Japan has seen the financial crises in Thailand, Indonesia, and Malaysia, adversely affect its economy in a manner it could not have foreseen even three years ago, further increasing the pressure on Japan to make structural changes to the economy.

In addition to these sudden reversals of fortune, in the case of information technology markets and the rapid development of the information superhighway, not only did it become apparent that Japan was losing dominance in existing markets, it was likely to lose out in the markets that would make or break national economies in the 21st century. The problem for Japan was described as two-fold: cut costs to remain competitive in existing markets, and encourage creativity through nurturing initiative to develop new markets (Kogura 1995; Uekusa 1995). Both these goals, it is argued, require a fundamental restructuring of company organisation (*soshiki*) and chain of command (*shiki keiretsu*, *meirei shiki*, *shirei keitō*), which will have, and is beginning to have, considerable ramifications for ideas about self and society. Quite simply a new type of employee is required, one who is able to think independently, and is encouraged to do so, within organisations which not only encourage, but through their structural organisation, require people to freely express their opinions and take individual responsibility. In short, for economic reasons Japan is being forced to embrace a kind of individualism. This is where the events of the Bubble become significant, as the morality and structuring of society which had resisted any kind of individualism throughout the post-WWII period has now been discredited by events, providing the opportunity, and the public's consent, for industry to usher in changes to work ethics and working practices which accord far more with an ethics of individual rights and a strong public domain of a kind which was first selectively embraced by the Meiji Government (Gluck 1985; Irokawa 1985; Hall et al. 1988), and enshrined in the Constitution of 1947 (Sakamoto and Ward 1987; Tanaka 1991).

In the Spring of 1995, the weekly economics and business magazines were suddenly full of articles about restructuring the Japanese company. I was made aware of this from the

advertisements which hang over the aisles in the trains in Japan - an excellent source of current trends and opinion. Articles such as "Schedule for the White-collar change of direction (*Uwaito karā ryuudōka no sukejyaru*)",[3] "Fifty years after the war: A transition in the life-style of the salaryman (*sengo gojuu nen sarariiman seikatsu no hensen*)",[4] "Japanese company restructuring plan ('*nihon no kaisha' kaizō puran*)",[5] filled the various *tokushuu* (special editions). This had me digging through my newspaper clippings from the same time a year before. In the daily press there had been a number of articles suggesting that Japanese-style management was in need of a rethink: a rethink along the lines of restructuring strategies and policies adopted by US industry in the 1980s. Those lauded Japanese industrial practices and structures were suddenly being touted as inefficient and expensive, and as endemically corrupt. These articles included discussions of the necessity of 'hollowing out' (*kuudōka*) industry, and of the need to nurture creativity. These themes were to appear sporadically in the press over the next year,[6] until the weekly magazines began to preach vociferously of the necessity to restructure the economy and industry in the Spring of 1995. Economics and business magazines such as *Shuukan Tōyō Keizai* (Toyo Economics Weekly), *Purejidento*, (President), and *Daiamondo* (Diamond), were full of articles about company restructuring, in particular a reorganizing strategy called rienjyiniyaringu (Business Process Re-engineering). At the same time as those first newspaper articles had appeared in the Spring of 1994, the popular business book section of all bookstores in the Tokyo area had around four or five different titles specifically about Business Process Re-engineering, and a number of other titles on the need for major structural industrial reform. These books, which were either translations of books originally published in the U.S., or interpretations of similar ideas with reference to the Japanese company by Japanese authors, were just one indication of the debate on structural reform which at the end of the 1990's is still on-going in Japan.[7] At the time these books were in the shops, I considered buying them, or at least making a note of them, but had decided not to. As simple as writing down a few titles might seem, I was constantly buying magazines and monitoring the popular media, and was at the time going through one of my periods of trying to impose a little order on the terminal entropy which afflicted my research subject in the early stages of my fieldwork. As things turned out, the subject filtered through the weekly economics magazines, complete with various angles and interviews, proved sufficient.

While *risutora* (restructuring) was the buzzword in 1994 and 1995, I subsequently discovered that a number of Japanese academics, commentators, and industrialists, had previously held a heated debate about the lessons to be learnt from the Bubble collapse and what changes needed to be made (Tanaka 1990; Uekusa 1990; Takeuchi 1991, 1992; Arai 1992; Morita 1992; Okumura 1992; Shimada 1992; Ijiri 1993). As part of this debate, many were drawing attention to what was referred to as 'cracks in the system' (Okumura 1992). While Business Process Re-engineering (BPR) is a programme to improve efficiency and creativity in the workplace, this debate was as much about

---

[3]*Shuukan Diamondo. 1995/4/15.*
[4]*Shuukan Diamondo. 1995/4/15.*
[5]*Shuukan Tōyō Keizai. 1995/4/15.*
[6]*Japan Times, 10/1/94. Japan Times, 28/2/94, Japan Times 21/3/94. Japan Times 24/3/94. Asahi Shimbun 19/5/95.*
[7]These are of the same genre as the popular business books described by Yoshino (1992) in his *Cultural Nationalism in Contemporary Japan.*

the structural and moral problems at the heart of society which had been exposed by the Bubble collapse, and which manifested themselves through the juggling of inimical moralities. It was a heavily ethically tinged debate, for the reasons stated above. With the economy stalled, and with growth forecast to be no higher than 3% in the foreseeable future, companies were being forced to lay off workers. Consequently, in addition to individual rights being demonstrably shown to have a weak institutional base in Japan, with powerful interests controlling a morality that promoted factional interests and favoured expediency, commitments of job security also appeared to be worth very little.

In 1992, in the aftermath of the Bubble and at the beginning of what would turn out to be a very long and deep economic slump, a number of Japan's major corporations began a series of forced resignations. To begin with, the numbers were in the tens and hundreds. These employees were middle managers in their late forties and early fifties who were deemed to be no longer useful. But by 1997 hundreds of thousands of employees, and not only older workers, were being forced to resign. In addition, it was clear that companies could no longer guarantee their workers, particularly their white-collar workers, 'life-time employment', an ideal which had become a part of what it means to be Japanese during the post-WWII period. By 1994 it seemed as though everything people believed about themselves and about their country was evaporating systematically before their very eyes. No wonder the Kanshin earthquake and the gas attack on the Tokyo subway moved some Japanese to comment, often with a dark streak of humour, that Doomsday was imminent. Although 'lifetime employment' had only been the preserve of a limited number of male employees, and, increasing numbers of those were choosing to change jobs when it suited them (Rohlen 1974; Clark 1979; Levine 1983; Plath 1983; Kondo 1990; Hamada 1992), it was significant that the ideal of 'lifetime employment' was being phased out, or modified at the very least.

Of more concern to the proponents of change than 'lifetime employment', was the ethically prescribed system of age/seniority. According to the informed opinion (Kogura 1995; Ubukata 1995), it was not primarily the enormous burden of costs on companies which demanded fundamental change, for reducing the number of employees would not change very much, the argument went. What was required was reform of the internal organisation and chain of command of companies which, based on age/seniority structures, did not allow for the free flow of ideas and initiatives within the organisation (Nakane 1970; Rohlen 1974; Kogura 1995; Ubukata 1995), and which was primarily responsible for the stifling of initiative and of the development of those new technologies on which Japan's future depended. These voices argued that employees were more concerned with their status relative to the 'significant others' (Hamada 1992) in the company, rather than with Customer Satisfaction (CS), one of the cornerstones of the restructuring programmes based on the BPR models from the U.S.

By 1994, even though these changes to company practices were still only being discussed, rapidly increasing levels of unemployment, together with no sign of a recovery in the economy, indicated that an upheaval unlike anything in the post-WWII period was occurring. Not only were hundreds of thousands of middle-aged and increasingly younger employees now unemployed, hundreds of thousands remained on payrolls with nothing to do. Yet, as significant, and with

arguably greater implications, was the fact that recruitment of university and high school leavers into Japan's top companies dropped by up to 90% between 1991 and 1994. As a result, unemployment continually broke national records month on month from November 1995 until May 1997, with the figure for the 16-24 age group nearly three times the national average in May 1997, creating a rapidly increasing pool of young Japanese who were not being socialized as adults in any coherent and systematic way whatsoever. Even as recruitment began to marginally pick up in 1997, it became evident that different recruitment policies and strategies were being adopted and implemented (Kaneko 1997; Inoue 1997; Oaklander and Whittaker 1997; Yahata 1997). Companies began recruiting as many mid-career employees as untrained graduate staff, and began employing them on more flexible terms. The emphasis was shifting from offering untrained employees, primarily school leavers and graduates, long-term employment, to offering trained employees various kinds of predominantly fixed-term contract employment. Spurred on by this burgeoning flexible economy (Harvey 1990), a fundamental shake-up in working practices and work ethics was clearly underway, with implications for the make-up not only of society, but also of personhood. A more individualistic society which privileged individual selves over collective selves appeared to be developing, replacing a society that privileged collective selves over individual selves, as had previously been the case.

Clearly, the implications for what is regarded as the ideal employee were considerable, and I saw the same changes in perceptions of personhood and self among those young Japanese, who, finding a future they expected had evaporated, were having to show initiative in order to cope with a set of circumstances that they had not been led to expect. These events, however, while forcing change on people, were also opening up possibilities. I noticed that even for those for whom events were impacting negatively on their lives, they were also given a freedom they would not have otherwise had, which many of them regarded positively. This was particularly evident among younger people. Free of the constraints imposed on them by an employment system popularly characterised by 'lifetime employment' and age/seniority, and related practices and ethics, I wondered what effect these structural changes were having on the reproduction of the social order. *Arubaito* (part-time) and temporary work does not create the same web of responsibilities and obligations as these 'Japanese-style management' (Itoh 1993; 1994) employment practices. Consequently, I conjectured that many young people were not learning and gaining experience of expectations and of established codes of conduct which underpin society as a whole. These young Japanese, whose ranks were increasing rapidly as every year school leavers and university graduates entered the job market, appeared to be left to their own devices, growing into young adulthood with no established codes of conduct to follow. Forced to think for themselves and use their initiative, they very soon would begin, I speculated, to establish a degree of independence and intransigence. Yet, although these young people were not gaining experience in establish codes of conduct and practices, this did not seem to be the problem one might have expected, as the very codes and practices which they were not being initiated into were being questioned and challenged, while the very qualities they were being forced to rely on, their initiative and their individuality, were being championed as the basis of the new work ethics and working practices being discussed.

What appeared to be a 'top-down' process of institutional reform was being accompanied by what appeared to be a complementary 'bottom-up' process of complementary changes to ethics and practices. All of which was aided by the discrediting of the moral framework which would have cast both these processes as unJapanese before the Bubble collapse. The collapse of the Bubble seemed to have created a moral vacuum, a space in which historical or ideological precedent appeared to have less significance, and which allowed for a more objective and measured assessment within the country of Japan's predicament.

I also noticed a trend among those in full-time employment to reject the practices and codes of conduct of the institutions they were members of. Aware that they were not guaranteed job security any more, and aware that fundamental changes were afoot, many young employees did not seem to feel the need or the desire to devote themselves to their companies in the way the majority of their predecessors had. They did not seem to feel the need to build the relationships with those above them, and they seemed to have trouble unquestioningly following orders or taking part in long-standing social practices considered vital to workplace success, such as going drinking after work and being prepared to give up their 'private time (*puraibeeto bubun*)', a concept which has increasingly been gaining currency and legitimacy, and which seems to be linked to the 'emerging individualism' (Miyanaga 1991). On the contrary, they seemed reluctant to give up any time between 5:00 p.m. and 9:00 a.m., openly stating that life outside work is more important than work, and that work is simply a means to earn money to enjoy life. These younger employees were not a minority who were bucking the system either, but a manifestation of a nationwide trend of putting leisure before work, which had first come to widespread public attention in the annual NHK lifestyle questionnaire of 1988 (Tsukio 1992), and officially recognised in the annual Government white paper on lifestyles in 1995 (Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Japanese Government web page 1996)

*******

I reasoned that change was occurring on at least two heuristically separable levels. At an institutional level, a 'top-down' process, through company restructuring, projected legislative deregulation, and the growth of a flexible economy, accompanied by a 'bottom-up' process, legitimated by those institutional changes and the ethics and practices of the burgeoning flexible economy. I wanted to demonstrate what changes were being implemented and the effects they were having on perceptions of and constructions of individual selves and collective selves. In order to assess the pervasiveness and likelihood of these new ideas about selves and society becoming the dominant ethics of Japanese society, I wanted to undertake two case studies interrogating the two heuristically separable processes outlined above. One would ideally be in a company which was implementing a restructuring programme, the other would be among a group of young Japanese who could be regarded as living within the 'spaces' (Harvey 1990) which had appeared in Japanese society after the collapse of the Bubble, opened up by the recession and the rapidly developing flexible economy. I would look for continuities and changes over time, and for similarities and

differences between the two case studies.

Among the employees of a company undergoing a restructuring programme, I wanted to study the company's philosophy, its organisational structure, and its command structure. I wanted to study the reward system, motivational goals, the decision-making process, and how responsibility is allocated within the company, in order to map what I term the topography of selves, both individual and collective, within this kind of workplace. Initially, I considered approaching Sony, or NEC, or one of the big banks, large companies who I had read were implementing radical rationalisation programmes. By pure chance, I came to study a smaller company, but one which had already fostered and institutionalized an individualism through the kinds of changes to work ethics and practices being discussed in Japan at the time. For the other case study, I decided to study those young people who attend underground dance music Techno parties. One of the reasons why I decided upon this case study was because I was regularly going to underground dance music clubs myself, and already had many potential interviewees through many friends and acquaintances that I had met during my time in Tokyo between 1993 and 1995. But more importantly, it was quite evident that an individualism was flourishing at these events.

In my opinion, the rave or Techno club is the most visible aspect of a post-industrial culture which is appearing in many different parts of the world, and which is a product of the kinds of economic systemic changes and technological changes which are occurring in Japan at the present time. From my own experience I knew that this musical event was in many ways a performance which ritualized and affirmed the cultural ideals of those who attend, and in that sense was a very old and trusted means of reiterating and defining social solidarity (Chernoff 1979; Schechner and Appel 1990). I wondered whether a mechanism was occurring at these parties, whereby young Japanese who had been left to drift and establish their own adult sense of self, due to the chaos within the country as a whole, were seeking each other out and making sense of what was happening around them, as well as making sense of each other and of themselves. I speculated that an individualism of some kind was being established, negotiated, and legitimated at these parties, and I wanted to establish a method to discover whether this individualism was similar to the individualism which had been institutionalized in the software company I was going to study. Whatever the results, I decided that these two case studies would allow me to test my theory that an individualism of some kind was being established in post-Bubble Japan through both a 'top-down' and 'bottom-up' process.

While all this was fermenting in my mind in the Spring of 1995, I told a Japanese friend, whom I knew took a keen interest in sociology and anthropology, about my thoughts. He suggested I look at *seken* and *sekentei*, about which he had just been reading, and which he regarded as essential to an understanding of Japanese society. I told him that I had never heard of either, but after he briefly explained to me what *seken* and *sekentei* was, I became very interested. I needed a model to help me apprehend the individualism which was clearly emerging around me, and I wondered if the relationship between the concepts of *seken* and *sekentei* could be used as an analytical contruct to plot the development of the emerging individualim.

*Seken*, written with the characters *yo*, whose core meaning is 'world', and *aida*, whose core

meaning is 'space between', has almost totally eluded anthropologists, although it lies at the heart of Japanese conceptions of morality, personhood, and social space. My initial searches, while in Japan, suggested that both *seken* and *sekentei* had not been the subject of anthropological investigation. Rather than being filled with excitement at the prospect of happening upon uncharted territory, however, I was more concerned that *seken* and *sekentei* had either been considered by anthropologists at some time, and had been discarded as inconsequential, or they had been written about at some length, and that somehow or other I had missed this. Either way, I was uneasy about pursuing this line of enquiry to begin with. Nevertheless, both *seken* and *sekentei* seemed important, so I continued to investigate them. My friend gave a number of titles, all of them in Japanese (Aida 1972; Inoue 1977; Abe 1994, 1995), which I patiently scanned in order to assess whether *seken* and *sekentei* would be useful tools for apprehending a changing Japanese self. My supervisor then informed me that Benedict (1946) had discussed something which sounded very similar to *seken* which I should investigate, and upon my return to Britain in June 1996 I eventually found two minor references in English to *seken* and *sekentei* (Kuwayama 1992; Lebra 1992).

*Seken* is the major category of social space in Benedict's discussion of *giri* (a reciprocal hierarchical relationship based on limitless obligation) in *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword* (1946), even though she never uses the word and never elaborates on what she repeatedly refers to as 'the world': that is, Ego's 'world'. From a position of knowing what *seken* is, it is very easy to see the category in *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword*. Yet even though Benedict glossed *seken* as 'the world', thus missing its significance, no anthropologist, subsequently, has paused to question the nature of this 'world' she constantly mentions. The 'world' that Benedict refers to becomes clear in the Japanese translation of *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword*: *Kiku to Katana* (Hasegawa (tr.) 1950). Benedict uses a number of popular Japanese sayings and proverbs to construct her thesis on *giri*, many of which revolve around *seken* in the Japanese translation. How *seken* is used in *Kiku to Katana*, together with other spatial and moral references, clearly illustrates that *seken* refers to a particular category of social space defined and constructed by the expectations and actions of the persons who inhabit that space. Countless times Benedict refers to a social space she calls 'the world', in inverted commas, which Hasegawa translates as *seken*, which would almost definitely have been the word Bendedict's informants would have had in mind when they spoke to Benedict in English, or the word they would have used when speaking through an interpreter. Hasegawa picks this up and consequently spreads a whole new light, not only on Benedict (1946), but also on the anthropological study of social space and personhood in Japan.

*The Chrysanthemum and the Sword* has been criticised over the years, but the text has not been exhausted. There is still much to engage with, particularly chapters six, seven, eight, and ten, on *on* (limitless obligation) and *giri*. Using the proverbs to orientate the translation, Hasegawa has 'filled in the gaps' here and there, interpreting Benedict, making the text more precise, and illuminating confusion and contradictions which Benedict's imprecise use of the word 'world' caused. From the way Benedict used proverbs and sayings, Hasegawa realised that Benedict was talking about *seken* when alluding to a Japanese's 'world', even though Benedict herself, who spoke no Japanese, remained totally unaware of this. Hasegawa, through translating 'world' as *seken*, clarifies what

Benedict is discussing. Benedict herself never begins to discuss this 'world', although she was on the right track when she recognised the existence of identifiable social spaces with their particular ethics, constraints, motivations and actions.

*Seken* makes its first appearance in *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword* in chapter seven. The title of the chapter, 'The Repayment Hardest To Bear', is from a Japanese proverb, *Giri hodo tsurai mono wa nai* (there is nothing as tough as *giri*) (Hasegawa 1950: 182). In the Japanese translation, *seken* first appears in an explanation of *giri* in a Japanese dictionary: 'something one does to forestall apology to the world (*seken e no mōshiwake ni fuimi nagara suru koto*)' (Hasegawa 1950: 183). This need to apologise to *seken* places *seken* firmly as a social construction of some importance. *Seken* is then the word used by Hasegawa to translate 'world' in one of the 'two quite distinct divisions' (Benedict 1946: 95) of *giri* which Benedict herself devises: "What I shall call 'giri to the world' - literally 'repaying *giri*' - is one's obligation to repay *on* to one's fellow's (Benedict 1946: 95). When the reader comes across 'giri to the world' at this point in the book s/he is unlikely to assign any precise meaning to this 'world'. Not so the Japanese reader who will read *seken ni tai suru giri*: 'giri with respect to *seken*' (Hasegawa 1950: 184). Hasegawa interprets Benedict's use of 'world' and translates accordingly, giving 'world' its precise meaning in this context. Benedict's analysis of *giri* is confused, and it is unwise to attempt to map *seken* from her analysis of *giri*. Indeed, from my research, the relationship between *seken* and *giri* is far from straightforward or obvious. Yet even though Benedict's analysis of *giri* into two types is untenable, it reveals that she undoubtedly took the 'world' which she uses in her 'giri to the world' concept, from that 'world' which she was continually coming across in interview. In the interviews she undertook, this 'world' was undoubtedly *seken* and it is therefore not surprising, and correct, that Hasegawa should have translated Benedict's concept as *Seken ni tai suru giri*: 'giri with respect to *seken*' (Hasegawa 1950: 184).

The next time that *seken* appears, it is with direct reference to that group of persons to which an individual is bound by obligations and expectations:

> Today's constantly used phrases are full of resentment and of emphasis on the pressure of public opinion which compels a person to do *giri* against his wishes...All these usages carry the implication of unwillingness and of compliance for 'mere decency's sake', as the Japanese dictionary phrases it." (*Benedict 1946: 99*)

In *Kiku to Katana*, 'mere decency's sake' is translated as, '*tada sekentei wo tsukurou tame ni*' (Hasegawa 1950: 192), which literally means, "simply for the purposes of preserving *sekentei*". In the next paragraph, Benedict uses a proverb to make her point, 'It is what people say that makes it so necessary to comply' (Benedict 1946: 99), which Hasegawa translates as: '*seken no torizata ga osoroshii kara de aru*' (Hasegawa 1950: 192). Literally, this means, 'because the gossip of *seken* is frightening', a common expression.

In Chapter Ten, 'The Dilemma of Virtue', Hasegawa translates 'society' as *seken* (Benedict 1946: 156; Hasegawa 1950: 308). Benedict writes:

> The strong identification of circumspection with self-respect includes...watchfulness of all the cues one observes in other people's acts, and a strong sense that other people are sitting in judgment. "One cultivates self-respect (one must *jichō*)," they say, "because of society." "If there were no society one would not need to respect oneself (cultivate *jichō*)" (*Benedict 1946: 156*)

Hasegawa reinstates the Japanese sayings: '*seken ga urusai kara jichō seneba naranai*' , which literally means, '*seken* is noisy so you have to be careful', and: '*seken to iu mono ga nakereba, jichō shinaku tomo*

*yoi no da ga*' (Hasegawa 1950: 308), which translated literally is: ' if it wasn't for *seken* it would be OK to do as you please'.[8]

*Seken* can be further understood as a recognised social space with sanctions by drawing attention to the important difference between *seken* and *sekai* which is revealed through comparing the texts of The Chrysanthemum and the Sword and *Kiku to Katana*. *Sekai* is another word meaning 'the world' which appears in *Kiku to Katana*. In *Kenkyusha's New Japanese Dictionary*, and *Shōgakukan's* 11 volume *Japanese-English Dictionary*, *sekai* is explained as the world as a physical object or space, not as a social space. How Hasegawa translates using both *seken* and *sekai* throws more light on just what *seken* is. The first thing to note about Hasegawa's use of *sekai* is that it always requires qualification by what in English grammar would be called an adjectival noun, in order to establish and fix its meaning in a social context. This is never the case with Hasegawa's use of *seken*, which always stands alone because its meaning in Japanese is precise and clear. Benedict writes: 'To the Japanese it is sufficient reward to be respected in his world...' (Benedict 1946: 123). Hasegawa translates this as: '*Nihonjin kara mireba, jibun no zoku shiteiru sekai de sonkei sarereba, sore de mō juubun na mukui de aru*' (Hasegawa 1950: 244). It is important to note that this is not a saying or a proverb, and that Benedict does not put the word 'world' in inverted commas in this example. I may be reading more into this point than it can hold, but I would argue that because 'world' is not in inverted commas and because Hasegawa did not have a known saying or proverb to refer to, she erred on the side of caution and avoided using *seken* because of its specific meaning. Again she translates literally: 'From the point of view of the Japanese, if there is respect from *the world to which one is affiliated*, that is enough' (my italics). *Sekai* is qualified with *jibun no zoku shiteiru*: 'one's own affiliated...'.

As another example, Benedict employs a concept she refers to as 'the circle of *giri*' (Benedict 1946: 99), which she places in inverted commas. Unfortunately it is not possible to establish from either text whether this is a term coined by Benedict, or a Japanese saying. Hasegawa translates 'the circle of *giri*' as: '*giri no sekai*' (Hasegawa 1950: 193). Whether she is quoting a Japanese saying adopted by Benedict, or translating Benedict's own idea, she avoids using *seken*, because this circle is not contiguous with *seken*. Instead she chooses *sekai* and a qualifying adjectival noun. Again, Hasegawa's avoidance of using *seken* helps us to further get an idea of what *seken* is. Hasegawa follows the same approach in another example. Benedict writes: 'the immediate circle of his intimate family...' (Benedict 1946: 94). Hasegawa translates this as: '*mijika na nikushin no sekai no naka de*,' (Hasegawa 1950: 183). Again, this social space described by Benedict is not *seken*, and I would therefore expect Hasegawa to avoid using the word. Indeed, she chooses *sekai* with a qualifying noun. In my final example, where Benedict writes: "[T]he dictionary translates 'It can't be helped because it is giri to the world' as 'People will not accept any other course of action'." (Benedict 1946: 99), the saying: 'People will not accept any other course of action', is translated by Hasegawa as '*seken e no giri dakara itashikata ga nai*' (Hasegawa 1950: 193), which literally means: "Because of *giri* to *seken* it can't be helped". In addition to indicating the sanctioning power of *seken*, another clue to the social construction of *seken* is contained in the word *itashikata*. The verb *itasu* is the humble form of

[8] I am translating *jichō* as 'prudence' or 'caution'. *Kenkyusha New Japanese-English Dictionary. 5th Edition.*

the verb *suru* (to do), the common phrase being *shikata ga nai*: 'It can't be helped'. The use of the humble form, specifically identifies *seken* as something which Ego should accord respect, which conforms with the assertion that *seken* is an important and ethically defined social space close to Ego that governs motivation and action to a considerable extent.

*Seken* is the 'world' of an individual that s/he either has to be careful to maintain, or feels a desire to be positively regarded by. Lebra (1992) gives some examples:

> The *seken* constituency varies in accordance to where self happens to stand...It may include one's kindred (outside the immediate family), neighours, schoolmates, colleagues, clientele, or a large ill-defined aggregate of people, known and unknown to self (*Lebra 1992: 107*).

Lebra then introduces the sanctioning power of *seken* which coerces those individuals who comprise *seken* to act according to *seken* rules. She describes how *seken* has 'eyes', 'ears', and a 'mouth', "watching, hearing, and gossiping about the self" (Lebra 1992: 107). Lebra regards this body metaphor as giving *seken* a sense of immediacy, which at the same time is invisible and ill-defined, and makes the self feel vulnerable. Despite the introduction into Japan of those ethics which are enshrined in the Western idea of the nation state and a civil society, and in Japanese law, which privilege the individual in a strong public domain, *seken*, which privileges factional interest groups over individuals, has continued to be the primary moral framework of Japan in the post-WWII period (Inoue 1977; Abe 1994, 1995), overriding both individual rights and the public domain, and even having the potential to override the law, which, by promoting equality of individual rights and individuals as autonomous individuals in the public domain, comes into conflict with *seken* rules. Abe, a historian who has written extensively on *seken*, draws our attention to the fact that the word 'society' was introduced into the Japanese language around the 10th year of the Meiji Period, and was translated as *shakai*. But at the time, if you asked what '*shakai*' was, the answer would be that it was a European concept (Abe 1994). Abe notes that there are many sayings and proverbs which ethically prescribe action which talk of *seken*, but there isn't a single one about *shakai*. He tells us that *seken* is a part of everybody's life in Japan. It is on everybody's lips and they know it well: "There isn't a single adult who does not know about *seken* (*seken wo shiranai otona wa hitori mo nai n desu*)" (Abe 1994: 59). In *Kenkyusha's New Japanese Dictionary*, *seken* is translated as 'world', but all entries refer to social space. In Shōgakukan's *Nihon Kokugo Daijiten*, the Japanese equivalent to the full Oxford Dictionary, in volume eleven all entries refer to a social space with particular ethical provisions.

*Seken* is not something which exists outside human beings, but is rather expressed through them, through their *sekentei*. *Sekentei* is what Lebra terms 'the presentational self', a 'face' which is presented to *seken*, a particular way of acting which is in accordance with *seken* rules. Intimately connected to *seken*, *sekentei* is written as *seken* with the additional character for 'body' (*tai*) which when read as *tei* means 'appearance', 'air', 'condition', or 'state' (Halpern 1990). In their various uses, all these meanings throw light on what *sekentei* is: the self that is addressed to *seken*. Therefore, it is individuals who patrol each other and coerce them into acting according to *seken* conventions. Abe gives the example of a group of colleagues going to the same restaurant and all ordering the same meal, as an example of the coercive nature of *seken*, displayed through an 'affiliated group (*shozoku shuudan*)' (Abe 1994: 64). He also outlines *seken* as something which is very familiar:

> *Seken* is structured by (*seken to iu mono wa.....de naritatteiru*) age seniority (*nenkō jōretsu*), gift giving (*zōyo*), mutual compensation (*goshuu*), etc. The scope (*han'i*) of *seken* is the extent to which persons exchange New Year's Cards (*nengajō*), or New Year's gifts (o seibo), summer gifts (*o chuugen*) ...Gift giving and mutual compensation are very influential (*haba wo kikaseteiru*). If we work back from this, we can see that *seken* is continually being made from scratch from the year grades at junior high and high school, through *senpai/kōhai* (senior/junior) relationships in school club activities (*Abe 1994: 63; my translation*).

Abe states that *seken* is given priority over all else, but what this means is that *seken* is given priority over the individual self and over the public domain, and over individuals who are members of other 'affiliated groups (*shozoku shuudan*)' and other *seken*. How *seken* can work against the interests of the greater whole is described by Abe talking about his own experiences:

> At the moment I am affiliated to a university (*daigaku ni shozoku shiteiru*), and there are four or five departments, each with its own *seken*. The teachers of a department mutually recognize each other and *seken* develops (*gakubu no sensei wa otagai ni kao wo shiiteiru to iu imi de seken ni natteimasu*). A university is a slightly unusual example of *seken*, because the manner in which a person enters a university and a company is a little different. However, it is the same in the sense that we give our interests top priority. In other words we give priority to the interests of the department. This is the main characteristic of *seken* and it is reasonable to say for the moment that the university is a place in which these various *seken* vie with each other.
>
> The literary world is another *seken*. For example, take what is in fact a pathetic short story which everybody praises to the heights...Why is such a worthless piece praised like this? The reason why is because the author of the short story is affiliated to the same *seken* as the critics....I was a newspaper literary critic committee member for ten years, so I know the procedure well. A literary critic has his own horse to back. Even if the writing of that person is only about six on a scale of one to ten, the critic would say to the committee, "this guy hasn't been picked up for two years, so it's time to do something about him". The meaning of this observation is "basically this stuff is no good, but please publish it as a favour (*giri de iretekudasai yo*)". There is no mistake that this is the way they think (*to iu koto to omotte machigaimasen*). In most cases, this relationship is never spoken (*kou iu kankei ga zenbu to wa iimasen ga hotondo desu*). The literary world, the singing world, the acting world, are just like the academic world. Not surprisingly, from the centre of this, there is no possibility of any objective standards. What benefits *seken* gets priority over everything else (*sono seken no zoku shiteiru mono no rieki wo, nani yorimo yuusen shite kangaeru kara desu*) (*1994: 61; my translation*).

*Seken* appears to be the moral framework of 'the group model of Japanese society' (Befu 1980b), while *sekentei* appears to be a presentational aspect of the individual self which the individual self mobilises in what anthropologists describe as *tatemae* (public behaviour) or *omote* ('front' or 'formal') situations (Hendry 1993).

Because *seken* appeared to impose conformity on its members, through their individual *sekentei*, I reasoned that within a collective self that encouraged individualistic action, in other words within a group of individual selves which privileged and legitimated the expression of individuality (*kosei*), *seken* and *sekentei* might be reconfigured in some way, indicating a reconfigured moral framework and ethical base, which described and defined the topography of those individual selves in moral terms. I also realised that *seken* and *sekentei*, by prescribing and explaining action within a given setting, could also describe and define the topography of individual selves within collective selves which resemble various group models of Japanese society (Befu 1980a, 1980b, 1990), and that by studying any reconfiguring of *seken* and *sekentei*, as it was perceived by individual selves within the software company, and among individual selves at underground dance music Techno parties, I might be able to plot the continuities and changes to concepts of personhood and to the constructions of selves, both individual and collective, that appeared to be occurring within society as a whole in the aftermath of the Bubble.

*******

**Theory, Historiography, Method**

In this section, I want to discuss the methodology I used for apprehending and conceptualizing selves, both individual and collective. The methodology had to be able to apprehend change, because my thesis suggests that selves in Japan are being 'redefined'. Redefinition implies change from one type of self to another. Therefore, my method had to be able to describe selves both before redefinition and afterwards, and then to be able to put forward a thesis of redefinition. 'Before' and 'after' are arbitrary points in a process that is on-going; selves are never fixed, but are constantly changing. In view of this, I sought to develop theory and method which would respect the voices of the individuals who were the subjects of my research: the employees in GA, the software company, and the party-goers. I would take my cue from them, and develop theory and method from their 'narratives of being and becoming'. This was no beginning from a blank slate, however. Theory and method, as both formal theory and method, and as 'pre-cognition' and 'pre-judgment' precedes such beginnings, but there is theory and method which recognizes this and the centrality of 'authorial' individual selves to the existence and development of the 'being and becoming of selves'. This method is Interpretive Method.

My method can be said to be interpretivist with positivistic intentions. Methodology in the social sciences derives from method used in the natural sciences in the 19th century. This was essentially in order to satisfy prevailing epistemological criteria at the time. But almost as soon as the social sciences began to use natural scientific method, it became clear that natural scientific method was unsuitable in significant ways. Unlike the natural sciences, the primary object of investigation in the social sciences, human beings, engage in what Max Weber described as 'the subjective interpretation of action' (Weber 1978). Weber clearly separates the natural sciences from the social sciences, on the basis that people, unlike cells or molecules or planets, engage in subjective interpretation, and consequently cannot be regarded as 'objects' which can be relied upon to act in a particular way, under a certain set of conditions, regardless of time or place, which other investigators can reproduce without too much trouble. In addition, the subjects of social scientific investigation often have ideas of their own about what they do and why they do it, which the social scientist is both methodologically and ethically obliged to take into account. For Weber, these differences between natural science and social science require different methods and procedures.

Regardless of the challenges which social science theory and method presented to traditional positivistic theory and method, I want to say at the outset, that I firmly believe that anthropology is a science, That is to say, I believe in the collection of empirical data through the rigorous execution of carefully planned method, as the fundamental basis of anthropological research. And that through the interplay of inductive and deductive processes, theories and data to explain social phenomena which can be corroborated by others, should be rigorously pursued to form a corpus of knowledge, like any natural science. There is much about 'scientific method' which

is fruitful and productive in the execution of anthropology, and which guarantees a degree of rigour and an empirical foundation which is indispensable if anthropology, and the social sciences in general, are to contribute to our understanding and to knowledge, generally.

Weber was the first major figure in sociology or anthropology to attempt to build a methodology around a subjectively interpreting individual. However, within what Gadamer (1975) terms the 'human sciences', which includes history, Weber was not alone. The effect of subjective interpretation on an analysis by an observer, and its implications for epistemology, became a central question for philosophy towards the end of the nineteenth century, and remains so to this day. The question of subjectivity and of subjectively interpreting individuals, and its challenge to an epistemology which was built on the possibility of universal truth achieved through objective verification, had become important for historians attempting to find some consistency between ancient exegetical texts, notably those written before Christ, and those written afterwards. Clearly, these accounts were different, not least because they were written by different people, at different times, in different places, and under different sets of conditions, creating different views of the same events. It was only by taking all these factors into account that historians could begin to find a 'truth', a consistent viewpoint, and one which they themselves had to piece together, taking into account how their own trajectories of experience were brought to bear on their interpretation.

The importance of subjectivity and of the role of interpreting individuals, both those undertaking investigations and those being studied, created what Gadamer (1975) termed 'the epistemological problem of history'. Put simply, the problem was that it was not possible for one viewpoint to be selected from all the available viewpoints, and for that viewpoint to be regarded as the objective, verifiable truth. Consequently, under the criteria of inclusion for an epistemology based on natural scientific method, historical texts could not be regarded as knowledge. Evidently, the question of subjectivity and of subjective interpretation presented profound challenges to epistemology and could not be ignored.

This epistemological problem of history was also a problem for the social sciences more generally. Just as the study of texts written by individuals who subjectively interpret under different conditions, in different times and places, presents a certain set of theoretical, methodological and epistemological problems, so does the study of individuals and societies for the same reason. As I mentioned above, the question of subjectivity and of subjectively interpreting individuals, as both investigators and investigated, presents epistemological and methodological problems which set in motion a critique of scientific method and epistemology.

The fact that the primary object of social scientific investigation is a living, thinking being who interprets subjectively, renders natural scientific method problematic. People do not act with the consistency of molecules or planets under similar conditions, and, therefore, method for the understanding of social scientific phenomena has to be able, on the one hand to account for the variation that exists, and on the other, has to present results which pass the criteria for the growth of knowledge. That is, which satisfy epistemological criteria of verifiability. It was primarily the fact that these criteria for the growth of knowledge were built on the principles of objective truth, that spurred Husserl and Heidegger (Gadamer 1975) to attempt to develop a philosophy of being (and as

social science is essentially the study of 'being', we can say that they were foundational in developing a philosophy of the social sciences) which satisfied the prevailing epistemology, while presenting a critique of it. Their intent was to develop a philosophy of existence which satisfied the criteria for the growth of knowledge, by explaining how human understanding accumulates through the process of being. For Husserl and Heidegger in particular, it was vital to explain the processes of how human beings comprehend and conceptualize themselves, which in itself is an endeavour to bring subjective truth, or consciousness, within the bounds of epistemology. This endeavour of understanding how human beings verify their own existence then provides a starting point for the development of theory and method for the social sciences. This was Dilthey's approach to establishing an epistemology of the 'human sciences' (Gadamer 1975), and more recently Ricoeur's (Ricoeur 1979).

One of the major problems of natural scientific method for the social sciences was the insistence on, and belief in, the possibility of strict, objective verification of phenomena. Regardless of the questions concerning the problematic nature of regarding social actors as 'objects', which is what drove Husserl's phenomenological research in his later *Logical Investigations*, the major problem with objectivity is that it also forces us to ignore the impact of time and space on phenomena, simply because objectively verifiable truth has to satisfy conditions which transcend time and place. Because of the pivotal role of subjectivity, and of subjective interpretation in the construction of social reality, historically and in the present, objectivity had to be reassessed both as a criterion for the growth of knowledge, and as a formulation of the 'way of being' under investigation. As I described above, for philosophers such as Husserl and Heidegger, and more recently Ricoeur, it was as part of their discussions on the nature of being which drove their critiques of objectivity, whereas for historians like Dilthey and sociologists like Weber, it was the pursuit of theory and method capable of embracing subjective interpretation which drove their critiques of objectivity.

It is beyond the scope of this thesis to review the historiographical development of these debates in their entirety, but it is necessary for me to discuss certain aspects of them as they impact on the anthropological method I have selected for the study of selves. So it is with Husserl and Heidegger that I will begin, because it was these men who provided the social sciences with insights into the processes by which individuals interpret, and arguments as to why these explanations satisfied epistemological criteria. I will then proceed to Dilthey, who attempted to provide a philosophical and epistemological base for the social sciences, by fashioning a methodology based on hermeneutics, driven by empiricism, and drawing primarily on the work of Husserl's phenomenology. I then proceed to Gadamer, who as Dilthey's biographer, further developed hermeneutic method by looking to Heidegger's ontology of being. I then move from the philosophers and historians, to describe how sociologists embraced interpretive ideas and method. First Weber in comparison to Durkheim, who can be regarded as a positivist rather than an interpretivist, before following the interpretivist tradition into the modern social sciences through both the sociological and anthropological traditions.

The revelation which Dilthey discovered in Husserl was two-fold. First of all, in the fifth

*Logical Investigation*, Husserl theorized that consciousness is not an object which can be studied as such, but is a 'co-ordination of intentional experiences', a givenness, constituted by the temporality of consciousness as a 'time-consciousness' (Gadamer 1975). Husserl argued that consciousness follows from the flow of experience, which has a constantly unfolding horizon and which is defined by that horizon. All human beings are enmeshed in trajectories which cannot be isolated from each other, consequently all human beings, logically, affect the development of understanding of all the others. In this way, Husserl suggests that individual consciousness exists within a world consciousness, which he names 'the phenomenon of world'.

The implications for social science theory and method was, first: that by regarding individuals as a consciousness constituted as a co-ordination of experiences, and as a givenness which is constituted by other consciousnesses in time and space, the epistemological basis for overcoming objectivity had been prepared. And secondly, it could be argued that social reality is intrinsically bound up with the consciousness of individuals, that this consciousness is fluid and time-dependent, and that method to apprehend it must take the particular horizons of experience of consciousness into account in arriving at an understanding. Critical for Dilthey, as part of Husserl' s 'phenomenon of world' the writer and reader of texts also exist as 'co-ordinations' moving forward through horizons of experience at different time-points, which also have to be taken into account if a 'true' reading of a text, that is, one which satisfies epistemological criteria, can be achieved. In this way, Dilthey caught sight of the possibility of both a radically improved theory and method for the understanding of historical reality (and we can include social reality in the present), as well as a reconfigured epistemological base on which that understanding could legitimately be regarded as knowledge.

Heidegger is an important figure in this discussion because, as Gadamer describes: "Heidegger entered into the problems of historical hermeneutics and critique...in order to explicate the fore-structure of understanding for the purposes of ontology (Gadamer 1975:265). It was Heidegger who developed the idea that understanding proceeds as a hermeneutic circle in time. In *Being and Time*, Heidegger explains how an epistemologically grounded understanding must proceed as a dialogue with oneself, through hermeneutic reflection, whereby the individual must rigorously reflect on all experience. Heidegger describes how it is "our first, last, and constant task in interpreting...to make the scientific theme secure by working out [the] fore-structures in terms of the things themselves" (Heidegger 1927). Fore-structures are prejudices, or more accurately, given the pejorative valence we attach to word prejudice today, pre-conceptions. As Gadamer notes, although Heidegger is not concerned with developing a theory and method for the practice of understanding social reality for the 'human sciences', his project of wanting to show how understanding, as that which constitutes being, is achieved, can form the basis of an interpretive method for the social sciences. I will quote Gadamer at length , as he describes how Heidegger's work on the ontology of being could become the foundation of interpretive method for the social sciences:

> All correct interpretation must be on guard against arbitrary fancies and the limitations imposed by imperceptible habits of thought, and must direct its gaze "on the things themselves"...For the interpreter to let himself be guided by the things themselves is not obviously a matter of a single "conscientious" decision, but is the "first, last, and constant task". For it is necessary to keep one's gaze fixed on the thing throughout all the constant distractions that originate in the interpreter himself. A person who is trying to understand a text is always projecting. He projects a meaning for the text as a whole as soon as some initial meaning

> emerges in the text. Again, the initial meaning emerges only because he is reading the text with particular expectations in regard to a certain meaning. Working out this fore-projection, which is constantly revised in terms of what emerges as he penetrates into the meaning, is understanding what is there...The process that Heidegger describes is that every revision of the fore-projection is capable of projecting before itself a new projection of meaning; rival projects can emerge side by side until it becomes clear what the unity of meaning is; interpretation begins with fore-conceptions that are replaced by more suitable ones. This constant process of new projection constitutes the movement of understanding and interpretation. A person who is trying to understand is exposed to distraction from fore-meanings that are not borne out by the things themselves. Working out appropriate projections, anticipatory in nature, to be confirmed "by the things themselves", is the constant task of understanding. The only "objectivity" here is the confirmation of the fore-meaning in its being worked out. Indeed, what characterises the arbitrariness of inappropriate fore-meanings if not that they come to nothing in being worked out? (*Gadamer 1975: 266)* .

Gadamer notes that this process is in fact the 'radicalization' of a procedure that human beings exercise whenever they comprehend anything (Gadamer 1975: 267).

This careful weeding out of inappropriate fore-meanings is by no means easy. There are at least two case in this thesis when I projected certain assumptions, based on certain 'fore-structures', or 'fore-meanings'. One, which I mention at the beginning of 7.1, was how I missed the relevance of the word 'affiliation (*shozoku*)' in defining a 'group (*shuudan*)'. From the careful analysis of what people were saying, and how they were saying it, I eventually concluded that a collective self to which people are not, in a very strict sense 'affiliated (*shozoku*)', is not *shuudan*. I eventually concluded that both *shuudan* and *shozoku* carry many secondary meanings which refer to a particular structure of relationships and ethics. A collective self which is constituted by individuals who give primacy to an ethics of individuality (*kosei*), do not appear to regard themselves as 'affiliated (*shozoku*)'. This was described as a feeling that, as members of a collective self in which they are morally proscribed to 'express their selves (*jibun wo dasu*)', it doesn't feel quite right to say they belong to a 'group (*shuudan*)'. I say 'feel', because these reports only express an uneasiness about using the word *shuudan*. These individuals, in all but one case, didn't know why it feels strange to use the word. And even in that one case, the individual was talking about 'affiliation (*shozoku*)', about why 'being affiliated to a group (*shuudan ni shozoku suru*)' was inappropriate to describe how it felt working at GA, the software company. We were not talking about *shuudan* directly.

People clearly don't fully understand why they do things, or think things, in many cases, which makes the job of the anthropologist all the more difficult. As I discuss below, understanding is a collective effort, an *intersubjective* process. The anthropologist has to understand, that, as a self, s/he is implicated in this intersubjective process of understanding, and that this is the power, in a very Foucauldian sense, that the analyst has. The social scientist wields a much more subtle power than the natural scientist. It is not an authority to conduct research and draw conclusions. It is the power that any human being has to elicit meaning from experience, which is the 'scientific theme' that Heidegger alerts us to.

The other example I didn't even notice myself, but had to have pointed out to me, and this was no small matter. This was the notion that the ethics of individuality that is emerging in Japan in the aftermath of the Bubble, is built upon a fundamental ethic of a consistency of action. This was my own imputation, in fact, which I had not noticed, as I tried to 'make sense of' all the data which, towards the end of the thesis, was, quite literally, lying all over the floor, like autumn leaves in a park.

The recognition of the role of what Gadamer terms 'fore-meanings' and what Heidegger

refers to as 'fore-structures', is in the pursuit of knowledge, is of critical importance, not only from a methodological point of view, but, crucially, from an epistemological perspective. Strictly speaking, the requirement to be 'objective' requires the denial of subjective interpretation, so it is through the recognition of 'fore-structures' and 'fore-meanings' that objectivity is challenged, and through the adoption of rigorous procedures which attempt to weed out all 'inappropriate' fore-meanings and fore-structures, that the epistemological requirement for objectivity is overcome. After all, what is 'objectivity', as an epistemological criterion, but the requirement that a phenomenon can be corroborated to an acceptable degree? Instead of denying the existence of 'fore-structures', or of subjective interpretation, Heidegger instead sets about confronting prejudgement as an intrinsic part of understanding, attempting to bring it within what he himself called 'the scientific theme'.

Gadamer goes on to describe 'the discrediting of prejudice by the enlightenment', to demonstrate the roots of objectivism. He demonstrates that it was 'prejudice due to overhastiness' rather than 'prejudice due to human authority' which was discredited, quoting Kant from 1784 in his essay 'What is Enlightenment?', in which Kant exhorts: "Have the courage to use your *own* understanding" (Gadamer 1975: 271. italics in original). From Husserl, through Dilthey, and then by using Heidegger's ontological structure of understanding, Gadamer makes a strong argument for the removal of the requirement for objectivity from the epistemological foundations of the social sciences, paving the way for an interpretive social science on sound epistemological foundations.

*******

For Max Weber, the fundamental unit of sociological investigation is the individual. Collectivities, for Weber, are always groups of individuals, and can only be understood by studying the individuals which constitute particular collectivities. According to Weber, only from there can conclusions about social action on a collective level can be drawn. In ways like this, Weber is quite different from Durkheim, who regarded the collectivity and its *conscience collective* as the primary unit of social investigation, which could not be reduced to its constituent parts. Durkheim was a positivist in the tradition of Auguste Comte. Weber was a critic of positivistic social science, in that he did not regard the methods and procedures employed in the natural sciences as sufficient to understand social reality. This does not mean that he did not attach importance to methodological rigour in the collection of empirical data, or did not seek to formulate general laws of social action at the collective level, but rather that his position concerning the subjective interpretation of action by individuals challenged the positivistic approach.

Weber called the method he developed, focusing on the individuals' subjective interpretation, *verstehen*. This was a method whereby the social scientist attempted to forge an empathetic relationship with an individual whom s/he was studying, in order to understand the motives and action of that individual. This is not the same as 'taking a person's word for it', and therefore indicates that although Weber quite rightly regarded individual subjective experience as fundamental to social analysis, he was aware that individuals are not necessarily aware of what they do or why they do it, and that, therefore, the social scientist also has a crucial role to play in interpreting and explaining social action. In this way, Weber addressed early on, a problem which

has concerned social scientific theory and method for most of this century: The reconciliation of the subjective interpretation of individual actors, with the social scientists' 'need' to interpret that action.

Although clearly addressing the importance of subjectivity and interpretation in the study of social reality, Weber never systematically used his *verstehen* method (Parkin 1985), and in fact noted some of the difficulties involved in such an empathetic approach. Weber went so far as to say that it was necessary for both investigator and investigated to hold as similar values as possible, and that the more their values diverged, the less likely an analysis was possible. Clearly, as Parkin (1985) notes, Weber would have regarded his *verstehen* method as wholly unsuitable as an anthropological method. Whereas, in fact, *verstehen* can be regarded as the basis of an embryonic form of participant observation.

Durkheim, on the other hand, had less concerns about the effect the disparity in values between himself and those he studied might have on his results. An example is the religious practices of aboriginal Australians, which he used to build his thesis on elementary forms of religious life. Such analyses and conclusions were, however, often thoroughly overdetermined, for all the elements of 'truth' they revealed. This is not to deny the power of Durkheim's analyses, but from the present horizon, analyses which do not put a subjectively interpreting individual at the centre of the investigation cannot comprehend selfhood, and in this sense, Weber can be regarded as a more instrumental figure than Durkheim in the development of a methodology for studying selves.

Although both Weber and Durkheim were equally important figures in the development of early anthropological method, through the work of Radcliffe-Brown in particular, Durkheim became much more influential. Within anthropological method generally at this time, the individual self was considered a product of the structures and institutions which constituted social reality. For anthropologists, the individual, and individual behaviour was not a valid object of anthropological investigation. In this way, what Cohen and Rapport (1995) refers to as 'the problematic of consciousness', was 'sidestepped' in anthropology.

The same cannot be said for sociology, which gave a higher priority to the individual, and to intersubjectivity, much earlier than anthropology. This was for a number of reasons, notably the efforts of anthropology and sociology to define their proper domains of investigation in relation to each other. From early on anthropology became the comparative study of primitive societies, while sociology focused primarily on 'complex' urban populations. This division brought sociology closer to the discipline which studied individuals: psychology. Significantly, both studied the same communities, which in turn led to the separate discipline of social psychology. There has been dialogue between anthropology and sociology, with my own university department even changing its name to a 'department of anthropology and sociology', but it is clear that an ongoing desire to maintain some distance, certainly among some anthropologists, has resulted in certain important methodological developments, particularly those concerning the study of the self in sociology and social psychology, being ignored. I am referring particularly to the work of social psychologists like G.H. Mead, and the interactionist school of sociologists which drew heavily on Mead's work.

Smith (1983), as I quote in **4.3**, held this view, suggesting that anthropologists would have

had a 'much more plausible theory of the self' if the work of Mead had been recognised. By considering Mead from an historiographical perspective, it seems to me that the reason why anthropologists, particularly in Britain, did not regard Mead's work on the self as important, has more to do with the fact that Mead was a social psychologist, and that his work was taken up by sociologists, than the fact that the individual was not the primary unit of analysis for anthropology generally, at the time. This certainly seems the case, especially after the Interpretive Turn in the 1970s, when, just as the ramifications of subjective interpretation were being properly understood on a wide scale in anthropology, anthropologists turned to philosophers like Collingwood and Ricoeur, with no mention of Mead and the interactionist sociologists. Goffman is the exception, and I will consider him below.

George Herbert Mead's theories of the self parallel Dilthey's hermeneutics, but Mead, although clearly an exponent of Dilthey's work, was also influenced by the American pragmatists, John Dewey and Charles Horton Cooley (Prus 1996). For Mead, the self arises from, and is implicated in, the interaction of selves. Like Dilthey, Mead regarded social reality as an intersubjective process that emerges through the interaction of interpreting individuals, in time, in space. Although Mead regarded his own work as social psychology, he taught philosophy at the University of Chicago, and would have been aware of Dilthey's work. In much the same way that Dilthey regarded understanding as constantly accruing as horizons of experience roll back, Mead regarded the self as constantly in the process of becoming, through interaction with other selves, contingent entirely on their location in time and space. A key feature of this intersubjective consciousness for Mead, is a reflexive "I" which is capable of imagining a 'generalized other', on which the individual bases and judges his or her own actions:

> What goes to make up the organized self is the organization of the attitudes which are common to the group...There are certain common responses which each individual has toward certain common things, and in so far as those common responses are awakened in the individual when he is affecting other persons, he arouses his own self. Such responses are abstract attitudes [but] they constitute just what we term a man's...principles, the acknowledged attitudes of all members of the community toward what are the values of the community. He is putting himself in the place of the generalized other (*Mead 1934: 162*).

Mead's theories of an intersubjective self, both being and becoming, through the interaction of selves mobilizing a 'generalised other', can be seen in the interplay between *seken* and *sekentei*, where what is regarded as *seken nami* (that which conforms to *seken* rules, or is conventional) are the 'abstract attitudes' Mead talks of (**4.3**).

Mead emphasizes, not only that selves only exist in relationships with other selves, and that 'the self arises out of a social process' constituted by individuals. He is keen to make us aware that, although this interaction of individuals 'implies the pre-existence of the group' (Mead 1934: 164), in fact, selves, through interaction:

> develop a more elaborate organization than that out of which the self has arisen, and that the selves may be the organs, the essential parts at least, of this more elaborate social organization within which these selves arise and exist. Thus there is a social process out of which selves arise and within which further differentiation...takes place (*Mead 1934: 164*).

So, not only does Mead tell us that the self is a social entity which comes to exist through interaction with other selves, but which, importantly, through reflective thought and the concept of a generalised other, exists in solitude as well. He tells us that individual selves exist in a dynamic

relationship with, and mutually constitute, collective selves, in a process of being while becoming. The parallels with Dilthey's horizons of experience and Heidegger's ontology of being are very evident, indicating that here was a social scientist propounding interpretive method fifty years before anthropology discovered Dilthey.

Mead is the first person to systematically develop the idea of intersubjectivity as the basis of human 'being' in the social sciences. He does not discuss the position of an observer in defining the self, or of the more tricky subject of how the observer is implicated in the intersubjectivity of those he observes, which was a major concern of Dilthey and of anthropological method today. Mead regarded selves as existing and constantly in the process of becoming, intersubjectively. In this sense, he regarded objectivity not simply as impossible, but as irrelevant. According to Mead selves 'objectify', in the sense that they put themselves in the position of a 'generalised other', but this is always contingent on the intersubjective interaction with a given other, imagined or in person.

Mead tackles the subjective, but always within the framework of the intersubjectivity he espouses. It is always as an intersubjective 'me' that he discusses subjectivity. Mead is at pains to explain that, although the self is constituted by and reflects "the organized relational pattern of [the social process] as a whole", every self is different:

> Every individual self within a given society or social community reflects in its organized structure the whole relational pattern of organized social behaviour which that society or community exhibits or is carrying on...but since each of these individual selves reflects a uniquely different aspect or perspective of this pattern...from its own particular and unique place within the whole process of organized social behaviour - since that is, each is differently or uniquely related to that whole process and occupies its own essentially unique focus of relations therein - the structure of each is differently constituted by this pattern from the way...any other is so constituted (*Mead 1934: 201*).

The individual is clearly the primary social entity for Mead, but he always stresses that this individual is constituted by the 'relational pattern' of the social processes which surround the individual self, mediated through and constituted intersubjectivity by the subjectivity of those whom Ego encounters. At the same time, the individual self is the 'organ' through which 'social organization' differentiates (Mead 1934: 164), so that, in Mead's view, the self is a generative entity, and individual and community are clearly mutually constitutive of each other.[9] Although I did not use Mead's ideas as part of my own method, the relationship between *seken* and *sekentei* leads me to a theory of the self that is remarkably like Mead's. In the final chapter, I suggest that the self can be made visible when considered as part of a 'trigonometrical triangulation' of individual self, the mapping of social space, and morality, in a dynamic, mutually constitutive relationship, revealing what I term the 'topography of the self'.

For Mead, it is through language primarily, although he also discusses gesture, that selves are implicated in each other, and through which they are revealed to themselves and each other, by means of "the triadic relation on which the existence of meaning is based" (Mead 1934:145). According to Mead both the self and community are defined, and can be known, through the existence of shared meanings. Self and community exist as a result of shared meanings, and it is by means of communication that meaning is shared, that selves emerge and exist, and by which

[9]Mead remarks that the self is implicated in the development of 'more elaborate organisations'. While I agree with him that the individual self is 'authorial' (Cohen 1994), Mead's language suggests an evolutionary process, a view to which I do not subscribe.

community is constituted: a symbolic construction of community (Cohen 1985).

In a very fundamental way, Mead is a colossus ignored in the anthropology of the self. Certainly, in the anthropology of Japan, Lebra, Smith, and Plath, have all alluded to Mead's work, but theoretical and methodological discussions within anthropology, generally, do not attempt to systematically develop his ideas. It is not until now, over sixty years later, that anthropological work on the self, as evinced by this thesis, demonstrates the validity of Mead's work on the self in a comprehensive way.

Yet, my encounter with Mead is decidedly 'post-thesis'. I write about Mead here and now, only after following the conventions of thesis writing and 'filling in the gaps' in my own scholarship, at the very end. Maybe this is a fair test of Mead's ideas. For while conducting this research, analyzing this data, and formulating the theories I do towards the end of the thesis, Mead was beyond my horizon of experience, allowing me to arrive at strikingly similar conclusions without knowledge of his ideas on the self. My lack of knowledge of Mead says something about the (lack of) rigour of my own scholarship, but says more about my undergraduate training, As Cohen notes, Mead's work: "has remained almost entirely absent from the undergraduate syllabuses of British social anthropology" (Cohen 1994: 2).

The work of Dilthey and Mead finds its earliest most coherent and systematic expression in the work of Herbert Blumer (1900-1987). Blumer was a student of Mead's who elaborated the theoretical and methodological implications of Mead's work into an approach he termed 'symbolic interaction' in 1937. Prus describes Blumer's symbolic interactionist approach as "establishing the vital link of the interpretive tradition with ethnographic research" (Prus 1996: 69). Once, again, though, Blumer's name remains absent from the syllabuses of British social anthropology.

*******

Through my research into *seken* and *sekentei*, in the work of Inoue (1977) and Abe (1994, 1995) I came across another development in sociological theory and method concerned with the self, largely ignored by anthropologists: reference group theory. Reference group theory addressed the very important concern among social psychologists and sociologists, about how individuals can hold opinions and attitudes which appear contradictory to those of the groups to which they belong. Since Cooley at least, an individual's self was regarded as being organized on the 'relational patterns' (Mead 1934) of the group(s) to which s/he belongs. For Cooley, this was to the extent that the self is a reflection. Cooley called this self the 'looking glass self' (Cooley 1909), and the group which constituted this self was the person's 'primary group', judged to be so on the basis of face-to-face contact.[10]

Sociologists had been grappling with 'the problematic aspects of multiple membership', at least since Dewey (Hyman and Singer 1968), but did not have a theory to explain what Shibutani describes as: "the inconsistency of behaviour as a person moves from one social context to another" (Shibutani 1968: 103). Reference group theory addressed this problem. Shibutani adds that reference group theory had been useful: "in accounting for the choices made among apparent alternatives,

[10]The relationship between *seken* and *sekentei* is described by Abe (1994, 1995) in similar terms (4.4).

where the selections seem to be contrary to the 'best interests' of the actor (Shibutani 1968: 103).

Hyman coined the term 'reference group' in 1942, and co-edited a volume in 1968 (Hyman and Singer 1968), which sought to draw together work done since then. In that volume, in a paper reprinted from the *American Journal of Sociology* (1955. Vol 60), Shibutani assesses the various meanings assigned to the term 'reference group' since Hyman first used it, and settles on the following meaning as the one which should be adopted. "A reference group [is] any collectivity, real or imagined, envied or despised, whose perspective is assumed by the actor [and] whose perspective constitutes the frame of reference of the actor" (Shibutani 1968: 105). This is essentially the meaning of 'reference group' used by Inoue (1977) in his description of *seken* (4.4), while Kuwayama (1992) references both Shibutani (1968) and Inoue (1977) in his brief discussion of *seken*.

The one sociologist who wrote about the self that anthropologists did take an interest in, was Erving Goffman. Cohen (1994) places Goffman as a symbolic interactionist in a direct line from Mead, although Prus (1996) places him outside the symbolic interactionists as a 'contemporary variant of the interpretive tradition'. Either way, Goffman's work is all about 'interaction', and his work concerning 'impression management', 'face', and the 'dramaturgical metaphor' of 'on-stage' and 'off-stage' (Goffman 1959), should have, and did, prove irresistible to anthropologists of Japan especially. However, the movement towards the denial of the individual in the anthropology of the Japanese self (4.1), has meant that use of Goffman's ideas in the anthropology of Japan have not been used as much as they might have been. His work on 'on-stage' and 'off-stage', and particularly 'front' and 'back', were extremely influential on the adoption of *omote* (frontroom) and *ura* (backroom) as concepts for the framing of Japanese society by anthropologists of Japan. Whereas his work on 'face', associated as it is, directly with the individual, has not been systematically developed. *Sekentei* , certainly, suggests Goffman's work on 'face' might be useful, although Goffman did not present a mechanism describing the linkage between his face-to-face 'interaction order' and the wider community, suggesting that although *sekentei* and 'face' indicate similarities, Goffman's work does not help, particularly, in explaining the linkage between *seken* and *sekentei*.

In a sense Goffman is an anomaly in the historiography of the self in anthropology. Not because his work is not of value, but because the work of Mead, the symbolic interactionists, and reference group theory, all lend themselves to an anthropology of the self in a more coherent, rigorous, and potentially productive way. Goffman's ideas are very interesting, and, significantly maybe, he presents them in what Prus (1996) calls a 'riveting' way. But he never systematically develops his methodology, and his work is quite anecdotal, which although not a criticism *per se*, makes his position in anthropology seem stranger, when others were much more systematic and rigorous in setting out their theory and method. Goffman clearly caught the imagination, whereas others did not.

Basham (1978), looking to establish a methodology for the study of complex societies, as the basis of the new 'urban anthropology', suggests that anthropologists look to the work of sociologists, with their long-standing tradition of studying urban societies. He reviews the 'urban ecology' approach of Robert. E. Park and his students, and the 'community study' approach, citing Whyte's very ethnographic *Street Corner Society* (1955) as an exemplary analysis. He then considers the

interactionist approach, but Goffman is the only example he provides. Cohen (1985) also spends some time looking over the work of Park and Burgess and the Chicago school. He challenges a number of the assumptions and theoretical and methodological approaches they and their followers put forward. Cohen's advice is that the analyst is better advised to go further back to Durkheim, Simmel and Weber, as these 'classical masters' provide the surest foundation on which to build contemporary approaches. Whereas the Chicago School, for all its "intellectual excitement, imagination and verve...considerably muddied the waters" (Cohen 1985: 38).

Cohen's comments are part of his study of the symbolic construction of community. According to Cohen (1985), community is not only a dynamic relationship between those individual selves which constitute it. Community, and therefore, on the basis of what I have been saying, sense of self, is constituted by the existence of other communities, and their relationship and position to each other. Just as Mead and the symbolic interactionists describe how individuals interpret symbols, primarily language in Mead's case, in order to define themselves and their membership of a given community, Cohen (1985), following Leach (1967) and Barth (1969) describes how communities, comprised of individuals, impute meaning to symbols on the basis that they contrast them with both the symbols and meanings of other communities. Leach focused on the contrastive nature of the construction of identity, which Barth took further by saying that it was at the boundaries of communities that identity, or ethnicity, was primarily visible. What characterised these approaches, not surprisingly considering they where anthropological approaches, was the emphasis on community rather than individuals. Nevertheless, as theories of community, they are profoundly important in furthering our understanding of selves. As Cohen (1985) argues, the meaning that individuals impute to symbols, be they words or objects, or gestures, is invariably contingent on the meaning that individuals in other communities give to the same symbols, and that meaning depends, not on some quality that is inherent in the symbol itself, but on the interpretation of those who assign meaning to it.

The new individuality that I describe as emerging in Japan in the late 1990s, challenges the legitimacy of *seken* as the primary moral framework of Japanese society. With the emergence of a kind of individuality, there is evidence of a corresponding public domain emerging, which transcends *seken*. Within this developing public domain, which in its nascent form suggests a unitary moral field, individuals are forming 'private groups' (Miyanaga 1991) on the basis of voluntary commitment. This raises a question of how members of these private groups define themselves in relation to other private groups, if they do at all, in the absence of *seken* and those symbols which are regarded as *seken nami* (consistent with *seken*). In the case of *seken*, the minute differentiation of ostensibly similar 'interaction rituals' (Goffman 1959) and 'ways if integrating (*sesshi kata*)' which exists between groups, provides a good example of Cohen's symbolic construction of community. I did not look for the symbolic construction of community among the collective selves I studied, and did not notice any such appropriation or mobilisation of symbols. However, I believe this would be a fruitful area of research for tracking the diversification and fragmentation of references that constitute *seken*, as collective selves in Japan move towards collectivities which encourage the expression of individuality.

*******

With this particular historiography of the self, I have outlined the theoretical and methodological developments which are the antecedents of the theoretical and methodological approaches I have used to study the redefinition of Japanese selves in the aftermath of the Bubble. As I have said, I have taken the indigenous concepts of *seken* and *sekentei* as the cue for my theoretical and methodological approach. The relationship between *seken* and *sekentei*, suggests a theory of individual and community, mutually constituted, existing in a dynamic relationship, and one which emphasizes the intersubjectivity of individual selves. The relationship between *seken* and *sekentei*, as a mechanism which connects individual to community, together with the adoption of an interpretive, intersubjective approach, fitted neatly with the method I had decided to use to collect and interpret data, which stressed the role of authorial selves and of consciousness in constructing social reality.

Cohen (1994) and Cohen and Rapport (1995) in my view indicate the overdue arrival of the authorial individual self as a legitimate anthropological object of investigation. The study of consciousness is not new to anthropology (Heelas and Lock 1982), but as Cohen and Rapport (1995) point out, the consciousness of any individual tended to be identified with the structural logic of that individual's social circumstances:

> If I am a Nuer, then I must think like a Nuer. Anthropologists thereby provided themselves with a simple means of defining away the *problematic* of consciousness. Their task was to provide a plausible interpretation of what the Nuer does. If social structure could not provide the answer, 'culture' could always be called in aid. In other than pathological or deviant cases, we simply assumed that people had similar kinds of consciousness if they could be depicted as 'sharing' culture or as being located within common social structures (*Cohen and Rapport 1995: 1*).

Within such a theoretical framework, individuals were described in terms of roles or offices. Mauss (1985) made a distinction between the conscious self, *moi*, and the socially constructed self, *la personne*, but Mauss' peregrinations around both these categories never moved beyond how they are socially determined. Fortes (1973), was one of the first to present a comprehensive theory of personhood, by arguing that all human societies have a concept of the person, and that this concept is how human societies address "how individual and society are interconnected" (Fortes 1973: 288). However Fortes' person was not a self as Mead described, but a role or office, conferred by 'society'. Individuals, tended to be seen not as individual selves, but as cyphers taking up roles, assuming office. This is now changing, as Cohen and Rapport note:

> Those whom we used to see and describe as role-players - realizing scripts written by a social *deus ex machina* - are now recognized as intentional, interpreting, imaginative, conscious agents (*Cohen and Rapport 1995: 3*).

Elsewhere, Cohen (1994) argues that culture, and we can include society, does not impose meaning on individuals. Culture, Cohen states, provides a framework which is substantiated by creative individual selves, who, through interpretation, give it meaning through thought, word and act. The framework itself is only ever partially revealed in the thoughts, words and acts of individuals. Fragments of the framework are collected by the anthropologist, who then tries to create that which in fact does not exist. The anthropologist collects fragments, in all their contradictory brilliance, and tries to 'make sense of' an often bewildering collage.

This was the primary method I used in collecting and interpreting ethnographic data for this thesis. In both Graphic Automation, the software company, and among those who attended underground dance music Techno parties, I collected personal histories, opinions and interpretations: narratives, which I then knitted together and interpreted. Like Mead, Cohen and Rapport settle on 'narratives' as a 'strategy of capture' to access individuals: "as having distinctive narratives of their embodiment and being-in-the-world" (Cohen and Rapport 1995: 7). To focus on individual selves in this way is not to privilege individual selves over collective selves. This would have been difficult in my case, because the individual narratives I collected spoke eloquently of individuals' responsibilities to other individual selves and collective selves, and of the importance of community for survival and success. It was this evident mutuality between individual selves and collective selves, which emerged from the 'narratives of embodiment and being-in-the-world', that first struck me about the new individualism emerging in Japan. As a result, this became one of the major themes of the thesis: to demonstrate that with the new individualism which is developing in Japan in the post-Bubble era, so a new conception of community is also developing, and that the two, as far as they are heuristically separable, constitute and define each other. The new individualism emerging in Japan cannot be conceived of or discussed as separate from new conceptions of community. The two are inseparable and can only be understood and discussed in terms of each other. This required both theory and method to recognise and preserve this mutual constitution of individual and community. Cohen and Rapport underline this important point:

> To pay attention to the consciousness of the individual and to the narratives in which it is expressed is *not* to privilege the individual over society; but, rather, is a necessary condition for the sensitive understanding of social relations and of society as composed of, and constituted by, subjective individuals in interaction. (*Cohen and Rapport 1995: 11*)

Bringing together a number of individual selves, in interaction, in order to discuss the anthropological questions the anthropologist has in mind is, in my view, potentially a much more productive method of arriving at an understanding of community *and* individuality in a given setting than one-to-one interviewing. Simply because it is how individual and community, individual self and collective self, exist in-the-world. In this sense, objectivity is bypassed, as the collecting of ethnographic data remains part of the intersubjective being-in-the world.

From a results perspective as well, this method has its strengths. Through discussion among a small number of persons, half realised, often previously unarticulated and partially comprehended meanings are brought into the open. Triggering off each other, the anthropologist included, everybody present arrives at an understanding. Having used this method to collect ethnographic data, I believe to be both productive and reliable. One-on-one interviewing can be more productive in some cases, and I also used this method. But on the basis of what I have been saying, the anthropologist and one interlocutor stand less chance of at arriving at a representative level of understanding. A remark which might have appeared as an irrelevant throwaway comment to the anthropologist *or* the interviewee (bearing in mind that the interviewee is just as likely to be unaware of the significance of a remark or particular choice of word), but which might later prove to be of critical importance, stands much more chance of being lost in a one-on-one situation. If others are present, they might pick up on that comment, consequently the meaning is immediately more

apparent, together with its relevance and importance, if it has much. The potential for misunderstanding and error is also much higher on a one-on-one basis. In the group setting, a process of cross-checking occurs spontaneously. Everybody is involved in articulating the understanding that is emerging through both verbal and non-verbal means, one person taking up another person's point, or presenting a different point of view. This is intersubjectivity in action. Slowly, communally, the anthropologist included, consciousness/understanding emerges. Kapferer describes this process as follows:

> Human consciousness is not something that simply begins with the individual human organism and then, in its awakening, moves out towards others. Consciousness takes form in the foundational fact of a unity of individual conscious human beings in a world already shared by others. To put it another way, individual consciousness emerges in a field of consciousness. It arises in a world of other conscious human beings who participate in the process of consciousness of any particular human being...In this view, the life of persons as conscious bodies is inextricably and intricately bound up with the consciousness of others. (*Kapferer 1995: 134*)

Consciousness, as understanding in Heidegger's sense, constituted intersubjectively, is clearly evident in Kapferer's description. Yet, even though this communal collecting of data might emulate situations in which understanding emerges in the course of everyday life, the process also occurs on a one-on-one basis.

The kind of cross-checking of data which can occur in a communal setting might be lost, but there can also be advantages of one-on-one interviewing. Japan is a good example of a place where a communal method of interviewing might prove to be spectacularly less effective than a one-on-one approach. The 'ranking consciousness' which Nakane (1970) describes tends to coerce all those present to agree with the most senior person present, as a matter of good manners despite anything else, which would provide the anthropologist with a disastrously partial view, and one which would most likely reinforce and hide the hegemonic order within the setting and within society as a whole. Among those I was interviewing using this method, I judged this would not be the case, and that communal interviewing on a difficult subject would, with these particular individuals, achieve results.

Communal interviewing provides a setting for the individuality of individual selves to emerge, or not. Persons familiar with Japan, presented with a group of Japanese would be able to see very easily whether Nakane's 'ranking consciousness was in operation, or whether those present were interacting as equals in expressing their 'individuality (*kosei*)'. Interviewing the employees at GA, one-on-one, I was unable to see how much individuality they were expressing, as individual selves need others to be individual with. Oblique cross-referenced questioning would help, but in the case of the employees at GA, it was primarily by witnessing them working together that I was able to see their individuality 'in action'. In the case of the party-goers, this was very evident in the interview, as all those present were clearly being very open, treating, and speaking to, everybody in a similar manner. This was also confirmed by observation at parties, where there was an openness unlike any other mass public event I went to in Japan.

I was able to interview those who attend underground dance music parties using a communal method, and as I felt that this would be productive I chose to do so. I kept the numbers low, otherwise the material which resulted from the sessions would have been too unwieldy to transcribe from tape to paper, and then to translate. With many voices present people talk over each

other, and the circle is too big for the microphone to pick up all the voices consistently. I decided that five was the maximum after having conducted one interview with five people, resulting in an hour of tape. Interviewing in groups can also be more fun for the interviewees, which resulted in relaxed and enjoyable, and therefore productive sessions on more occasions than not.

I used a tape recorder to capture my narratives. I was aware that some people might not wish to be recorded, but I was able to assure people of the confidentiality of the interviews, and nobody showed the slightest hesitation, or stared at it during the course of an interview, or discussion as I preferred to think of them. There was also no alternative to a tape recorder. Using a 'strategy of capture' (Cohen and Rapport 1995) which relies on narratives requires a careful and intricate dissection and assessment of language, which can only be achieved if the anthropologist has captured the nuances of intonation and choice of word. Intersubjectivity is captured within the diachronic sequence of verbal and non-verbal exchanges, carefully preserved and carefully considered afterwards.

This finally leads me to the analysis of research data. Thousands of miles away in Oxford, I spent, first, weeks listening to the tapes, usually with my wife, whose spoken Japanese is better than mine, while I would write down the transcription, handwritten in Japanese. Simply translating the narratives from Japanese to English without writing them in Japanese would have denied me the necessary opportunity to go over and over the words and sentences, annotated with remarks documenting sentiment, intonation or pauses. Having produced a written Japanese text, I then set about a translation into English, before beginning the analysis of both.

The process of understanding, just as Gadamer describes, and just as Heidegger warns, is full of booby traps, temptations, and seductions. Meanings leap out of the text constantly, from the beginning of the first listening of the tapes, to the last reading of the completed analysis. I was often straining, groaning, trying to make connections, trying to elicit meaning, while all the time, trying not to impose meaning. The social scientific endeavour is a lonely, and often seemingly thankless task. Yet, it is also very rewarding. In my own case, it is like a crusade to represent as truthfully as possible, whatever that means, and to describe and explain as clearly and as eloquently as possible, the people whose lives, and selves?, I became a part of in the name of the anthropological endeavour.

*******

Chapter One outlines the collapse of the Bubble by attempting to demonstrate how this helped create the conditions for the redefinition and legitimation of more individualistic selves, and of a community which prioritizes the expression of 'individuality (*kosei*)'. This redefinition and legitimation has been occurring either in the workplace, or as a consequence of changing workplace ethics and practices. For this reason, Chapter Two moves to the workplace to consider the earliest conceptualizations of these redefinitions by Japanese in the first few years following the collapse of the Bubble in 1991. These changes were most widely described as the 'collapse' or 'unraveling' of the 'lifetime employment system (*shunshin koyō seidō*)', or as the shift from a 'company-centred' society to

a 'people-centred' society (Okumura 1992; Morita 1992; Kaneko 1997). The chapter begins by attempting to establish a consensus on what 'the lifetime employment system' is. Anthropological representations (Nakane 1970; Rohlen 1974; Clark 1979; Hamada 1980; Levine 1983; Plath 1983; Kondo 1990; Hamada 1992) have tended to focus on length of tenure, which has obscured the matrices of ethics and practices of which the ideal of 'lifetime employment' is only one of many other equally important workplace ethics and practices, first discussed by Bellah (1957). By going back to Abegglen (1958), who made it quite clear that 'lifetime commitment was *a*, not *the*, characteristic of Japanese working practices, I attempt to demonstrate that anthropological representations of 'the lifetime employment system' are based on a number of distortions which have subsequently been reproduced. The chapter considers just what is collapsing or unraveling and why, before ending with a consideration of what is meant by a 'company-centred' society and a 'people-centred' society, and how this shift was evident prior to the Bubble.

Chapter Three begins to look in detail at the changes in attitudes to work, and changes in work ethics and practices which constitute what can usefully be regarded as a shift from a 'company-centred' to a 'people-centred' society. The chapter begins by documenting the history of Graphic Automation, the software company I worked at, from the perspective of the experiences of Matsuda-san, the president of the company, during his time as a software engineer with Tōshiba. I focus the attention on his reasons for leaving Tōshiba, and how these influenced his philosophy for his own company and the structure of the company. I then look in detail at the structure of Graphic Automation (GA), identifying both the continuities and changes between companies of the kind described by Nakane (1970), Rohlen (1974), Clark (1979), Kondo (1990) and Hamada (1992) to explain how individuality (*kosei*) is harnessed to achieve the economic goals outlined in the debates concerning company restructuring discussed above. The chapter continues by looking at how the reordering of space and time, and of motivations and rewards within the company, both acknowledges a shift towards a 'people-centred' society occurring within society as a whole through a 'bottom-up' process, and legitimates these reorderings through a 'top-down' process, through the company organisational structure and command structure. The chapter finishes by demonstrating that, consistent with the shift from a 'company-centred' society to a 'people-centred' society, Graphic Automation is a 'company as a collectivity of individual selves' rather than a 'company as family' (Kondo 1990).

Chapter Four begins by addressing the need to 'rehabilitate the individual'. A methodology of the kind discussed above to interrogate the relationship between individual and community, requires recognition of the existence of individual selves. This was not straightforward in the case of Japan, where there has recently been a trend of denying any category of the individual self as existing in Japan, arguing that categories of individual selves are imported Western categories (Kondo 1990, 1992; Rosenberger 1992). This is against a background of the country as a whole through the post-WWII period, where Individualism was increasingly situated as ideologically opposed to that which constituted Japaneseness. Both these positions made a retrieval and rehabilitation of the individual self as a social actor an early priority in the thesis. The fact that such a self existed was almost beyond doubt to my mind, for it was inconceivable to me that such a self

could not exist in some form or other and to some degree or other in any human society. Human beings are physically separate from each other, and at this fundamental level this has to inform our social selves in some basic way. By presenting a number of Japanese theories of the individual self (Doi 1973; Moeran 1989; Kuwayama 1992; Lebra 1992; Ikegami 1995), together with my own data, I was able to rehabilitate the individual self as a subject of anthropological analysis in Japan. I also challenged those theories of the Japanese self which deny the existence of a Japanese individual self, by raising the empirical and logical inconsistencies in these arguments, before arguing that the individualism that is emerging in Japan is not so much an individualism imported from 'the West', but is an identifiably Japanese individualism that has continuity with Japan's most recent past, as well as the distant past. In this way, the thesis contributes both to our understanding of individualism in Japan, and also to our understanding of individualism as a whole, by providing an example of an individualism which has developed distinctly from the 'Western' Hellenistic/Christian tradition ( Mauss 1985; Dumont 1985).

The chapter continues by seeking to identify the continuities and changes in the relationship between individual selves and the groups they belong to within GA, and between those described by Nakane (1970, Rohlen (1974), Clark (1979), Kondo (1990), Hamada (1992) within the workplace, and by Befu (1980a, 1980b, 1990) and Hendry (1993) more generally. It is at this point that I also introduce *seken* and *sekentei* in order to attempt to plot these changes and continuities. The chapter ends by considering the ramifications of the example of GA on how Japanese society has been described by anthropologists in terms of *giri*, and the series of 'bi-polar opposites' (Bachnik 1992) of *tatemae* (public behaviour) and *honne* (real feeling), *omote* ('front' or 'formal') and *ura* ('back' or 'informal'), and *uchi* (inside) and *soto* (outside), which Hendry (1993) describes as the 'particular combination of elements' which characterize Japanese society.

Chapter Five steps back to place GA within the broader context of the 'top-down' process, and to explain the development of the conditions under which a flexible economy is emerging, and under which work ethics within society as a whole are changing. This is also in order to lay the foundations for the discussion of the 'bottom-up' process among the party-goers in the following chapter. Chapter Five begins with an analysis of the debate concerning *risutora*, the neologism (from the word 'restructuring') for company re-engineering and reform. By situating this discussion at this point in the thesis, it is possible to see how the debates just after the Bubble in 1992/3 (Morita 1992; Okumura 1992; Tsukio 1992; Arai 1993; Yamamoto 1993) discussed in Chapter Two are part of the later debates concerning *risutora* (Kogura 1995; Miyauchi 1995; Ubukata 1995), which indicate how the debate had advanced towards a practical solution while still addressing many of the earlier concerns. The example of GA also serves to show how and in what way these solutions are actually being implemented, and what effect they are having on constructions of the self.

Following Harvey's (1990) work on 'flexible accumulation', together with the work of Itoh (1993, 1994, 1996) and others, and ethnographic examples, I demonstrate how a flexible economy is

developing in Japan, and how this together with the 'top-down' process is fuelling and also legitimating the 'bottom-up' process. I then finish the chapter with a consideration of changing work ethics, demonstrating how a 'bottom-up' process of 'individuation' (Dore 1992) has arguably been in motion since the early 1970s (Sengoku 1991), evidently gathering momentum during the 1980s (Miyanaga 1991; Tsukio 1992; Ijiri 1993), and is now manifest and gaining increasing momentum as the 1990s progress.

Chapter Six begins by considering Miyanaga's (1991) thesis on a 'passive individualism', which she saw emerging during the 1980s. While I do not agree with Miyanaga that this individualism is 'passive', I agree with her idea of a 'privatization of groups', whereby individualistic individuals 'come together voluntarily on the basis of personal commitment'. The formation of 'private groups' with the emergence of an individualism indicates a clear reconfiguring of the relationship between individual and community, and that the two do mutually constitute each other. What Miyanaga describes is a separation of informal relationships from the workplace, which conforms with the processes I describe as part of the shift from a 'company-centred' society to a 'people-centred' society. Using this idea, I suggest that underground dance music parties in Japan act as a setting for the negotiation, establishment, and legitimation of an emerging individualism. 'Private groups' such as underground dance music parties, provide a setting for the establishment of guidelines for thought and action, establishing and legitimating selves who have no other formal means of doing so, also providing an index and reference for managing and negotiating other situations, including the workplace.

Following a description of how underground electronic dance music works to facilitate the establishing and maintenance of both a new individualism and a new community, in a manner found in other types of performance (Chernoff 1979; Schechner and Appel 1990), I situate the interviewees' life courses within the course of the Bubble and within the ensuing aftermath of the Bubble collapse. I then end the chapter by asking what is it about these parties that makes people want to attend. This is because community formed voluntarily on the basis of personal commitment has to feel good, in order for there to be community. Having established what feels good at these parties, I then ask why it feels good. Having established what feels good and bad, and why, I then move on to the structure of selves and the relationships between them in a community voluntarily entered, in the following chapter.

In Chapter Seven, I return to consider what constitutes the individual self at these parties, together with its relationship to a generalised collective self, in a similar manner to that undertaken among the employees of the software company in Chapter Three. Fundamental similarities emerge between the employees of the software company and the party-goers, indicating that a similar kind of individualism and community is emerging through both the 'top-down' and 'bottom-up' processes. Having considered the relationship between this individual self and a generalised collective self, I seek to discover how the party-goers describe an underground dance music party and other forms of community they are part of. Familiar terms such as *shuudan* (group) and *nakama* (intimate group) are regarded as unsuitable, which not only sheds light on the new forms of community, but also sheds new light on the meanings these terms have for Japanese today. I then

return to consider how the party-goers perceive *seken* and *sekentei* and whether they sense *seken* and feel they have to present *sekentei* at these parties and in other aspects of their lives. Findings which match those among the employees of the software company again emerge, so that finally I am able to build up a picture of a redefined individual self, demonstrating and describing its continuities and the changes with the past, in terms of the past, a self that is both individualistic and identifiably Japanese: the embodiment of an emerging Japanese individualism.

*******

Through my discussions with the employees of the software company and with the party-goers, it became apparent that the term 'group', in Japanese *shuudan*, cannot be unproblemmatically used as a generic term for a collectivity of individual selves. *Shuudan*, although used generically by Japanese in the course of everyday speech, and etymologically is a generic term, it was shown to contain secondary meanings which refer to a particular structure of relationships between individual selves, to identifiable codes of conduct, and to particular ways of thinking and acting. I have therefore attempted to only use the word 'group', in inverted commas, when translating the word *shuudan*, when used by Japanese in interview or in discussion. Otherwise I use the term 'collective self' as a generic term. This term, first of all, cannot be confused with any Japanese word for a collective self, thus reducing the possibility of any hidden secondary meanings being missed by its usage. Of course, it might have collected a few by the end of the thesis! Secondly, this term conveys two important characteristics that collective selves have: that they are made up of collections of individual selves, and that, as socially constructed entities, collectivities of individual selves are also selves in their own right.

*******

# 1. After The Bubble

## 1) Excesses of the Bubble
## 2) Shock and Ruin
## 3) Corruption or Business as Usual? *Seken*, *õyake*, and the Public Domain

Chapter One attempts to demonstrate how the collapse of the Bubble helped create the conditions for the redefinition and legitimation of more individualistic selves, both individual and collective, during the 1990s. The collapse of the Bubble revealed inherent weaknesses in the public domain in Japan, by exposing the factional nature of *õyake*. *Õyake* has been regarded as 'the public' since the early Meiji Period (1868-1912), when the word, which referred to the Imperial family, was used to translate the English term 'public'. However, the differences are apposite, so that when the excesses of the Bubble, together with the subsequent shock and ruin, threw the custodians of *õyake*, the government, into conflict with the general public, the limitations and the dangers of having *õyake* as the public domain, were exposed.

I begin the chapter by trying to give an impression of the scale of the excesses of the Bubble, using statistics, anecdotal accounts, and media analyses (Takeuchi 1991; Arai 1993; Greenfeld 1995). What emerges is that much of the excess was corporate rather than individual, and that the seeds of dissatisfaction and disillusionment could be seen to exist while the Bubble was still growing, before the crash. Certainly, as the Bubble was growing, the mood in the country was buoyant, verging on arrogant, as many Japanese perceived events to be the crowning glory of Japan's efforts to catch up with and overtake 'the West'. There was a sense that events were demonstrating to the whole world that the Japanese were indeed different, and better, just as the national discourses on *ware ware nihonjin*, 'we Japanese', had suggested. Nevertheless, during the Bubble, the Japanese were diverted from producing things, as one commentator described it, to speculating on the financial markets, which created an unease and an air of unreality in the country that a lot of people also picked up on.

I then show that the Japanese Bubble was very similar to other economic speculative bubbles that have occurred through history, in terms of its development, characteristics and eventual crash (Kindleburger 1989; Uekusa 1991). However, while speculative bubble crashes are known to expose malpractice, in the Japanese case codes of conduct and practices which had been in place for many years, which had developed over the whole of the post-WWII period, and which can even be traced back much further than that, were suddenly being regarded as malpractice and corruption (*oshoku*). This is because they were regarded by the majority of the population to be

against the public interest. Yet, even though they were rightly regarded to be against the public interest, they were in the interests of *ōyake*. The chapter traces the development of the relationship between government, the bureaucracy, and industry over the post-WWII period, to show how these practices developed (Clark 1979; Shimada 1992; Okumura 1991; Sakakibara 1992), and that reforms to increase transparency and accountability were consistently deferred 'in the national interest' (Tanaka 1991).

*******

## 1.1) Excesses of the Bubble

> The term 'bubble economy' came into vogue in Japan at the end of the 1980's when the prices of Japanese land and stocks were being pushed ever higher amid a surge of speculative investments. With a sharp increase in the supply of money in the background, the Japanese had been diverted from their normal business of producing things, by a sudden enthusiasm for money games on the securities and real estate markets. The whole economy, it seemed, was being inflated into a gigantic financial bubble *(Takeuchi 1991: 8)*.

The GNP for Japan grew by 25% between 1985 and 1989, while the value of assets grew 80% (OECD). The real estate value of Tokyo was reportedly greater than the real estate value of the whole of the United States, together with the value of all the assets of all the companies listed on the New York Stock Exchange. As the price of land rocketed, investors, large and small, took out cheap loans on the backs of their spiraling land values.

> Designer boutiques flourished, Nouvelle Cuisine restaurants opened daily, jewellry and gold vendors couldn't keep up with the demand. There was money everywhere and it had to be spent. Between 1985 and 1990 about $700 thousand million flowed abroad. To buy Louis Vuitton steamer trunks and Rolex Perpetual Oyster watches in Paris or Geneva - or flagship buildings and movie studios in New York or Los Angeles.
>
> You saw money on the streets of Tokyo, glimpsed it in the rows of chauffeur-driven black Lexuses, Benzes, BMW's and Bentleys idling outside posh Ginza or Roppongi watering holes. Felt it in the crush of consumers jockeying for position at the Tiffany counter in the Mitsubishi department store. Heard about it from bar hostesses who described their customers taking them out for thousand dollar, seven course dinners. I remember watching a video tape of an NFL play-off game a friend sent me from the United States. At one point there was a slick commercial in which a silver, gull-wing Mercedes sports car from the Fifties rotated on a pedestal while an auctioneer took bids, photographers snapped pictures and potential buyers oohed and aahed at the fine piece of machinery on display. The gist of the commercial was that Mercedes Benz made very exquisite, very expensive cars which eventually, if you kept them for forty years, became objets d'art that were highly sought after by collectors. In the parking lot across the street from my cramped Tokyo apartment, there were three of those gull-winged collector's items parked. In December 1989, the Tokyo Stock Exchange's Nikkei Index peaked at 38,915.87. In less than two and a half years it would be down 60 percent, with trading volume off close to 80 percent. Real estate plummeted as much as 50 percent...And by 1993 the market had not yet hit bottom. Scandals also frightened investors away. Nomura Securities, Japan's largest brokerage, was caught compensating preferred clients against stock losses and other chicanery. In addition, the highly publicized Japanese purchases in America, such as Mitsubishi Estate's acquisition of the Rockefeller Center, in which it overpaid by as much as $400 million, were certified disasters. "The thing about the Rockefeller Center situation is that it's one case out of dozens. There are too many to mention," a Mitsubishi Estate executive told me.
>
> The bubble had burst." *(Greenfeld 1995: x)*

Greenfeld is a half-Japanese who edited *Tokyo Journal*, an English language magazine based on London's *Time Out* magazine. His is an anecdotal account, but my experiences three years later corroborate the authenticity and lack of hyperbole in his account. Many Japanese with whom I discussed this period in time had trouble believing that things were as they remember. Disbelief pervaded every discussion I had about life at the height of the Bubble. When discussing company expense accounts most people had trouble getting past their own disbelief in order to describe just how much money there was and how people tried, and - many added - failed, to spend it all. And everybody had a story about profligacy and excess. Waste was a word that figured heavily: everybody described how wasteful people were and how self-centred (*wagamama*) they became.[1]

When studied a little more closely, however, it emerges that most of the excessive behaviour and profligacy was corporate rather than individual. There is no doubt that a lot of

[1]All my accounts were collected in the Greater Tokyo area, but many of the accounts were from people who were from all corners of Japan, who confirmed that the *baburu* (the Bubble) affected the whole of Japan, if not every household.

individuals had a great deal of money, and that the majority of Japanese were comfortable. In the ten year period from 1979 to 1989, the monthly income of the average working family rose from ¥350,000 to ¥525,000, an increase of over 60%. However, during the same period, a three-bedroom family house an hour outside Tokyo which sold for $100,000 in 1979, sold for $1.5 million in 1989, and in a 1987 survey by the Prime Minister's Office, only 36.8% of Japan's citizens considered themselves to be affluent (*Japan Times Weekly Overseas Edition 27/1/90*). Many Japanese feel that the fruits of that success were not filtering down to the population as a whole:

> I become very angry at Americans and West Europeans when they say Japanese are very affluent. We are leading a frugal life" said 33-year-old Masaki Mikura, an employee at a large electric company...Mikura complained about the high inheritance tax,[2] costly daily goods and soaring land prices...I wouldn't say I live from hand to mouth, but I cannot go to the movies and I cannot afford a CD player. I am leading a frugal life (*JTIE April 16-22 1990*).

This raises an important point about life during the Bubble. The Bubble was created by, and predominately enjoyed by, corporate bodies and their senior staff, yet while everybody was still enjoying the fruits of the Bubble, nobody seemed to be fully aware of the effects that company buying power and preferential tax deductions were having on the cost of living for individuals and families. This is with the exception of land prices, which were very much in the news, particularly towards the height of the Bubble in 1989/90. The manner in which the price of land rocketed had, and continues to have in 1998, an impact on people's daily lives. In the year up to January 1991 the cost of residential land rose 17%, which continued a pattern of yearly rises which had started in 1986. The cost of used[3] apartments, which were rising faster because they tended to be closer to central Tokyo, rose by 20% during the same period. (*Japan Times Weekly International Edition* April 16-22 1990). Arai[4] (1992) gives examples of a number of commodities which are out of the reach of 'individuals'. The 'middle ranked white-collar worker' may have paid ¥10,000 or ¥20,000 per head at the most to take a family member out for a birthday dinner, while a company treating business clients would pay ¥50,000 to ¥100,000 per head. When buying a suit, a white collar worker, Arai notes:

> will at most be willing to pay ¥100,000. More likely he will settle for an off-the-rack suit at a department store, waiting until a bargain sale brings the price down to ¥30,000. In Ginza however there are stores that cater mainly or only to companies...and the suits they have on hand cost ¥300,000 or more." (*Arai 1992: 57*)

Golf club memberships are another example that Arai uses. Golf is a very popular sport in Japan, but most people hardly ever set foot on a golf course, instead having to content themselves with the local driving ranges, which are conspicuous for their towering, netted sides that characterize the suburbs of all the cities and towns of Japan. A man on retirement might be able to spend ¥20 million on a golf membership if he leaves himself and his wife little else:

> This is a very large sum indeed, but it is not enough to get into the best clubs in the Tokyo region. Their memberships go for ¥40 million, ¥50 million or more, and increasingly it is companies that are joining their membership roles. I could easily give other examples, but suffice to say that companies have stupendous buying power. On a per-item basis, they are prepared to pay three to five times what the individual will. This difference in purchasing power is having a distorting effect on Japanese society. The best cooks, tailors,

[2]Inheritance tax in Japan is linked to the cost of land. Nationally, land prices between 1989 and 1990 alone rose by 12.6 %. (*Japan Times Weekly International Edition. April 16-22. 1990.*) Between 1979 and 1989, land prices increased by an average of over 500% throughout Japan while salaries over the same period increased on average by 60%. (*OECD Economic Survey of Japan*)

[3]A 'used' apartment is one which is not brand new.

[4]Arai Shin'ya is Vice-President of a large national supermarket chain, and an advisor to Sumitomo Corporation, one of the largest corporations in Japan. He is also an author and columnist.

materials, and locations are now being monopolized by companies. You need an invitation from a company to play on the best golf courses, get a good seat at a *sumo* match, or join the most luxurious overseas excursions. Indeed it seems almost as if all beautiful young women save their smiles for corporate customers. Individuals are being driven by corporations into a corner of consumer society. At the centre of society the company reigns supreme. (*Arai 1992: 58*)

Arai is aware that a disparity of means and position in Japanese society is not new. He takes the culture of *ryōtei*, exclusive Japanese-style restaurants, "go[ing] back at least to the Meiji era"(Arai 1992: 59) as one example, and he asks himself the question: "Has the difference in financial strength between the company and the individual always been so large?". Using examples, Arai shows how the situation during the bubble years was 'unprecedented'.

This buying power, its effects on the cost of living, and the eventual revelations of malpractice and self-interest before, during, and after the Bubble, in corporations, the bureaucracy, and government, fuelled resentment which needs to be borne in mind when considering people's reactions to events after the Bubble, and their attitudes and actions during the continuing recession. From various angles, the picture of the company as something protective and as a source of life and fulfilment began to change into a picture of the company as an exploitative organism that feeds off the goodwill and strength of individuals, only to discard them when it becomes expedient to do so. Many people now have this attitude towards their employers, which is manifesting itself as a shunning of 'corporate centrism' (Okumura 1992, Miyanaga 1991) and a desire for a distinct separation of the workplace from the rest of an employee's life (see sections **2.4, 3.3, 5.4**).

The source of this disparity in buying power between corporations and individuals, according to Arai (1992), is the corporation's right to wide-ranging tax incentives and deductions, and the preferential assessment of asset values which corporations receive. According to Arai, these privileges are not only unjust, but promote certain values and breed individuals whose sole aim is to exploit this system:

The phenomena I have been discussing are not in and of themselves evil. In a free society, people should not be criticized for exercising their ingenuity and for looking after their own interests. As long as they do not break the law or behave unethically, they should be encouraged to live as they please. This is where the energy of a free society comes from. The problem comes when the actions of individuals transform society in a way that makes a large number of people unhappy. And as should be evident to all intelligent Japanese, the present trends are far from harmless...Thus while breaking out of the ongoing recession is a serious concern, it is a small problem compared with (*Arai.1992:62*) [the fact that] the structure that created the bubble economy is still intact, and it has grown stronger during the recession. The root problem is that companies are rich while people are poor. The buying power of the corporate sector has swollen to the point where it is encroaching on the domain of the individual. For people as consumers, citizens and individuals, this is the real problem that needs to be solved (*Arai 1992: 57*).

Arai's argument for redressing the balance of power and of rights between the company and the individual describes a mood which is keenly felt among the Japanese public. A situation where companies, as judicial persons, have been increasingly privileged over individuals has been developing since the end of WWII. Clark (1979) also notes the privileged position of the company as a legal body in Japan. By describing these privileges, Arai explains a root cause of people's dissatisfaction when it erupted after the Bubble crashed. Itoh also draws our attention to what must have caused smouldering resentment over time, when he notes that, in real terms, between 1975 and 1990, real incomes in Japan dropped year-on-year (Itoh 1994).

Yet, the Japanese people were in a celebratory mood in the late 1980s. The economy, in

terms of GDP exceeded that of the U.S., marking the point which many Japanese could never have imagined ever happening: a time when Japan caught up with and overtook 'the West'. Ordinary Japanese looked around themselves and wondered where all the wealth could be, and saw the excess and profligacy of the Bubble. Just as it looked a though they would receive the rewards they had been told would one day come, BANG....

I now want to demonstrate that the manner in which the bubble started and grew in Japan is consistent with other economic speculative bubbles in history. My reason for doing this is to try and distinguish between what can reasonably be attributed to financial bubbles, as they have regularly occurred, and that which cannot. Crashes expose malpractice (Kindleburger 1989),[5] which is what happened in the Japanese case, but what was different in the Japanese case is that the structure of relationships and the particular ethics of obligation, which were and still are widespread throughout society, were responsible for what came to be regarded as corruption and unfairness. Through the rest of this section and through 1.2, and 1.3, I will attempt to demonstrate that Japan was quite literally caught between two stools: one the world of *ōyake, seken*, and *giri*[6], and the other, the world of Public and Private, individual rights, and contract law. Essentially, the government, the bureaucracy, and the industrial elites were operating in a twilight world of obligations, factions, and favouritism, while the general public were excluded from this. However, they were brought into this world through the huge public issue of shares, particularly in NTT, the national telecommunications giant, when it was privatized. Two quite different sets of rules existed, and when the Bubble crashed the fact that there were two sets of rules was brutally exposed. When the general public attempted to seek redress under the law, common law was found to be unable to protect the interests of individuals in the public domain; yet people found themselves confronted with a set of rules with which they were only too familiar. The general public's unwillingness to accept, as they had tended to, the inherent favouritism and bias in Japanese society, which derives from the ethics of *seken* and 'group affiliation (*shuudan ni shozoku suru*)' (Nakane 1970; Aida 1972; Inoue 1977; Abe 1994; 1995), indicates a change in attitudes and values at the heart of mainstream society, which was crystallized by the Bubble collapse, but which manifested itself as confusion and misunderstanding.

Although speculative bubbles appear to be the more exciting part of economic history, with many voices in the aftermath of speculative bubbles openly saying 'the greedy bastards got their come-uppance',[7] the lives of many are ruined and the consequences for generations are often considerable. This is the first speculative bubble that has occurred in Japan's history and it has had a considerable psychological effect on ordinary people, in addition to the economic hardship it has caused. It was, before the bubble burst, commonly stated in Japan that what exists in Japan as Japanese capitalism or 'corporate' capitalism, was not susceptible to, or was more resilient to, the economic cycles experienced elsewhere in the world, because of its Japaneseness. While this is undoubtedly true to some extent, and will be discussed in 1.2, the evidence now shows that Japanese capitalism is not only susceptible to the same cycles and 'manias' as capitalist systems in other

[5]Charles Kindleburger is an often-published academic economic historian.
[6]Please refer to the Introduction or glossary for an outline of these terms.
[7]Arai Shin'ya (1992) builds an argument for the benefits of bubble crashes on this attitude.

local situations, but that it is also affected by events on a global scale. This manifest demonstration of interdependency and similarity has had a considerable effect on how the Japanese see themselves and the rest of the world.

Speculative economic bubbles are nothing new, and people 'losing their heads' during times of bubble conditions is also not uncommonaccording to Kindleburger (1989). The first chapter of his book is even titled: 'Financial Crises: A Hardy Perennial'.[8] Under bubble conditions people become susceptible to and suffer from 'displaced thinking', or 'speculation mania' (Kindleburger 1989):

> They had an immense capital dividend among an immense number of proprietors. It was naturally to be expected, therefore, that folly, negligence, and profusion should prevail in the whole management of their affairs. The knavery and extravagance of their stockjobbing operations are sufficiently known, [as are] the negligence, profusion and malversion of the servants of the company (*Kindleburger1989: 31l*).

This could have been one of many leader articles in any Japanese newspaper over the last six years, but it is Adam Smith speaking in *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* (1776). Clearly, over the centuries, speculative bubbles bring out familiar human characteristics. Kindleburger gives the following dispassionate description of a bubble cycle:

> What happens, basically, is that some event changes the economic outlook. New opportunities for profits are seized, and outdone, in ways so closely resembling irrationality as to constitute a mania. Once the excessive character of the upswing is realised, the financial system experiences a sort of 'distress', in the course of which the run to reverse the expansion process may become so precipitous as to resemble panic. In the manic phase, people of wealth or credit switch out of money or borrow to buy real or illiquid assets. In the panic, the reverse movement takes place, from real or financial assets to money, or repayment of debt, with a crash in the prices of commodities, houses, buildings, land, stocks, bonds - in short, in whatever has been the subject of the mania. (*Kindleburger1989:5*).

Kindleburger also tells us that bubbles are distinguished by individuals or institutions displaying the following characteristics:

> 1) Mob psychology; 2) people will change at differing stages of a continuing process, starting rationally and, gradually at first, then more quickly, losing contact with reality; 3) rationality will differ among different groups of traders, investors, or speculators, including those at the earlier stages and those at the later; 4) all will succumb to the fallacy of composition, which asserts that from time to time the whole is other than the sum of its parts; 5) there will be a failure of a market with rational expectations as to the *quality* of a reaction to a given stimulus to estimate the right *quantity*, especially when there are lags between stimulus and reaction; 6) irrationality may exist insofar as economic actors choose the wrong model, fail to take account of a particular and crucial bit of information, or go so far as to suppress information that does not conform to the model implicitly adopted (*Kindleburger1989: 32*).

For the economist, the economic bubble presents a special problem: how to rationalize their patent irrationality. Kindleburger presents a number of models by economists designed to rationalize economic bubbles, but nearly all of them have to recourse to some kind of mob psychology or hysteria at some point.[9] Herman Minsky's 'euphoria model' (Kindleburger.1989: 33) characterised by 'waves of excessive optimism' caused by "displacement,[10]" certain structural characteristics of the system, and human error" (Kindleburger 1989: 33), describes the Japanese case well. An event causes confidences to rise and optimism sets in, and financial institutions accept liability for things

[8]Kindleburger begins with the South Sea Bubble in London in 1719 and the Mississippi Bubble in Paris in 1720. He discusses the various 'bubble cycles' (Kitchin cycle: every 39 months. Juglar cycle: seven or eight years. Kuznet's cycle: every twenty years: Kondratieff's cycle, set off by major inventions such as the railway and the car. And from observation, he documents crises every ten years throughout the first half of the nineteenth century.

[9]For the anthropologist, the debate on bubbles among economists is interesting. The debate is reminiscent of the rationalist/substantivist debate in 'economic anthropology' in the Sixties and Seventies, and the Rationality debates. Kindleburger is good on arguing the case for anecdote ('historical episodes') in economics in Appendix A, and briefly in the preface (xii).

[10]"Displacement is some outside event that changes horizons, expectations, profit opportunities, behaviour...The event must be of significant size. Each day's events produce some changes in outlook, but few are significant enough to qualify as displacements." (*Kindleburger.1989:46*)

when normally they would not. In this model, a speculative bubble is fed by an increase in the money supply, particularly in the form of credit from banks, which Minsky describes as 'notoriously unstable'.

Following Minsky's model and beginning with 'displacement', an event which causes confidences to rise and optimism to set in, the event that keeps coming up in analyses and discussions as the point at which the bubble started is the Plaza Agreement in 1985. Uekusa (1991)[11] begins his analysis of the bubble in 1980, with the election of Ronald Reagan as President of The United States:

> The economic policies which came to be dubbed 'Reaganomics'...led to a mushrooming federal budget deficit, a sharp worsening of the current account balance, a rise in real interest rates, and a strong dollar. By the mid-1980s, the vicious cycle of a rising dollar and a growing external deficit had turned into the biggest political and economic problem facing the United States. As a result of slumping exports and booming imports, the United States turned into a net debtor at the end of 1984 for the first time since shortly after World War I....The expedient that the U.S. then chose was to seek devaluation of the dollar.
>
> This was the background to the Plaza Agreement of September 1985, in which the five leading industrial democracies agreed to encourage 'orderly appreciation of the non-dollar currencies against the dollar'. This accord *marked a clear change* from the erstwhile U.S. policy of not intervening in currency markets....And in the years that followed, the yen-dollar rate *shifted dramatically*. The dollar stood at ¥260 in February 1985, but by January 1988 it was worth only ¥120; this represented a 53% devaluation (*Uekusa 1991: 23*. My italics).

As the yen began to rise, interest rates were lowered, which in turn led to higher asset prices. The conditions for a bubble were set, all that was required now was human error:

> In the two years from late 1987 to late 1989, though interest rates remained basically unchanged, both stock and land prices surged. These prices went far beyond anything that could be explained on a theoretical basis. In other words a speculative bubble was forming. No bubble can grow without the willingness of people to accept the 'myth of rising prices' - the belief that assets whose prices have been rising will continue to go up in value. But while this sort of delusion is a necessary condition for the formation of a bubble, it is not a sufficient condition. There must also be an excess of credit in the financial system and this condition was met in the late 1980s...And indeed, the statistics on lending by financial institutions in the latter part of the 1980's indicate that the bulk of the marginal demand for funds during this period was for the purchase of assets. Excess growth in credit was clearly what made the bubble possible (*Uekusa 1991: 24*).

So far the Japanese bubble would seem to follow all previous bubbles to their unavoidable conclusion: crisis, panic, and crash. However, the Japanese bubble departs from other bubbles in a number of ways, which are covered in Minsky's 'euphoria' model by his 'certain structural characteristics of the system'. It is also these 'certain structural characteristics' which are at the centre of the allegations of malpractice. Relationships and practices which have not only been in place for many years, but which are also based on relationships and orientations in society as a whole, were being classified as corrupt and unfair in the aftermath of the Bubble.

*******

[11] Uekusa Kazuhide is currently a professor at Kyoto University. He is a former member of the Nomura Institute and the Ministry of Finance

## 1.2) Shock and ruin

In this section I will briefly outline of the development of the corporate sector of the Japanese economy. This is not a review of the internal structure of Japanese companies and management methods, but a review of inter-corporate relations in order to begin to explain how the structure of corporate society contributed to the securities scandals. In **1.3**, I will look at the responses to the Bubble collapse and at the root causes of how practices regarded as acceptable for so long in society as a whole, gradually became unacceptable to the majority of the Japanese people.

The significance of the scandals in Japan (they are referred to as *sukyandaru*) is the fact that the causes were, in no small part, a product of corporate structure and codes of conduct to be found throughout society. The depth of concern, both domestically and internationally, is compounded by the level of government and bureaucratic intervention in the economy, which not only created an unfair playing field, but which implicates members of government and the bureaucracy, including a recent Prime Minister Ryutarō Hashimoto, senior ministers, and senior bureaucrats:

> While...this system is not subject to total government control, neither is it guided entirely by autonomous industry initiatives. This approach certainly represents a departure from pure market economics, and in some respects is closer to the system of central planning in communist countries (*Shimada 1992: 19*).

I will begin with the government's role in shaping and directing economic initiatives since the beginning of the post-WWII period. This will be followed by an overview of corporate structure and the relationship between capital and industry. The percentage of capital raised from personal savings is high in Japan, a fact which is important in understanding the public's reaction to the securities scandals. With this in mind, the section ends with the argument that the public were manipulated by government and industry together, and that, in the aftermath of the Bubble and in the ensuing recession, they feel this acutely.

There is an extensive literature on the reforms implemented by the so-called New Dealers of the US Occupation Forces after Japan's defeat in WWII (Sakamoto and Ward 1987; Hall et al. 1989; Beasley 1990), but I wish to concentrate on the policies and initiatives of the Japanese government in directing and shaping the economy over the following forty years, from 1949 until 1989. Even though the reforms introduced by the occupying U.S. forces included dismantling the *zaibatsu*, the pre-war family-owned conglomerates, the structure of industry in the post-war period closely followed the pre-war *zaibatsu* model:

> The concentration of modern industry in the hands of a small number of entrepreneurs was...initiated by the Meiji Government. Businessmen like Yasuda, Iwasaki of Mitsubishi, and Minomura of Mitsui had been offered subsidies, and even the materials to start up new enterprises, and then were left to compound their successes, free from taxation. Many of the early entrepreneurs founded a number of companies in different industries, and it was these companies, linked by common origins and common ownership, supplied with money by the same bank, and trading preferentially with each other, that comprised the core of the *zaibatsu*. Groups like Mitsubishi, Yasuda, Sumitomo or Mitsui, having started advantageously, continued to benefit from government influence in, for example, the allocation of import licences for technology. They also gained immeasurably from their privileged access to capital. Each *zaibatsu* had a bank, which acted as a money pump. Deposits from the public were channelled towards the other member companies of the group, by loans or by the underwriting of share and debenture issues. The ability to raise

capital easily allowed the *zaibatsu* to take the lead in the development of heavy, capital intensive industries like engineering and chemicals between the two World Wars (*Clark 1979: 42*).

In the immediate post-WWII period, the Japanese government intervened to nurture particular industries by co-ordinating financial institutions and manufacturing industry in such a way as to develop a closely supervised rebuilding of the economy and the country. This included the EconomicStabilization Board to coordinate industrial development, and the Reconstruction Bank to channel funds into particular industries. Successive governments made it possible for particular industries to have access to investment capital at very low interest rates:

> By forcing small and medium sized corporate borrowers to deposit money in banks as a precondition for taking out loans, financial institutions around the country built up a supply of capital. This practice resulted in very high effective interest rates, but the [financial] institutions compensated by providing information and expertise that contributed to their borrowers long term growth. Meanwhile, the accumulated capital was channelled via city banks into lending to strategically important industries backed by Bank of Japan credit guarantees (*Shimada 1992: 17*).

In 1948 the Ministry of International Trade and Industry (MITI) was established, and began to encourage and sponsor the formation of conglomerates based on the old *zaibatsu*, built around banks (Beasley 1990; 245). What began to emerge is a system whereby preferential treatment was given to strategically important industries, but in return for carrying the burden for the cheap loans given to these important customers, the smaller, less strategically important customers would receive 'information' from the financial institutions, which was collected by the institutions themselves, and by government and those companies earmarked as strategically important. Also, much like during the early Meiji Period (1868-1912), the acquisition of technological information and foreign currency was made a priority. In order to amass both of these, large tax concessions were offered for export income and fact-finding tours abroad were organised using what scarce foreign currency there was.[12] Within the country, a culture of information-sharing began to develop within networks of industries that were organised around financial institutions, and which were nurtured and protected by central government. The government's actions during this period are referred to as 'administrative guidance (*gyōsei shidō*)', a term which has come to have pejorative overtones in the aftermath of the Bubble. In 1960 deregulation occurred, and the loosening of regulations and the liberalization of capital transactions marked a point when government took a lesser role in co-ordinating economic development. Government was still involved, however:

> [T]here was no consistent targeting or grand design of industrial policy by the government. More likely, the government selected key industries as investment and loan recipients because of their vigorous, long-term demand for funds and their relative credit-worthiness, responding more or less passively to market demands rather than creating them. This process was of course not solely dictated by economic principles...it also inevitably involved political considerations as well (*Sakakibara 1993: 28*).

Following deregulation, the member companies of the various networks arranged around financial institutions began to strengthen their networks by acquiring stocks in each other, in order to fend off take-over initiatives by foreign investors who were now able to enter the market. This is known as 'cross-shareholding'.

> This process led to the formation of *keiretsu*, or the corporate groups, including the six that took shape among the pre-war *zaibatsu*. The bank that formed the core of each group served as the main bank for the

[12]Bailey (1990) notes that U.S. purchases of equipment for the Korean War alone amounted to $600 million in 1951, $800 million in 1952, and $800 million in 1953, which was a substantial injection of foreign currency.

group's members (*Shimada 1992: 18*).

> Almost all listed Japanese companies have placed more than half their stock in the hands of friendly shareholders who cannot easily be persuaded to join a takeover bid. These shareholders are the firms and financial institutions the company does business with, and they are often members of the same corporate group (*Okumura 1991: 19*).

It is the development of this structural arrangement between companies, characterised by 'reciprocal equity holdings' (Sakakibara 1993) which is, in my opinion, a cause of the securities scandals and a key to understanding how a system of favoured clients developed. Practices engendered by this structural arrangement, together with the relationship between capital and industry, discussed below, explains the public's disenchantment with the economic community:

> In many cases, reciprocal equity holdings are extremely widespread, stockholders at the top of the list being firms within the same corporate grouping and financial institutions. As this takes place on a reciprocal basis, *the policies chosen by a firm often reflect the interests of the group as a whole and even go against those of the ordinary stockholder (of the company concerned).* This kind of inter-group finance and diversification or internalization of the capital market through interlocking stockholding isolates group companies from competition in the capital market. As a result of this isolation...group companies are able to select their own policies free from market competition...[N]o corporate takeovers will occur even if the corporate management concerned *does not maximize the companies market value but pursues the interests of the company's direct participants.* This is because the major stockholders are *insiders protecting the interests of the current management.* Even if, for example, current stock prices are markedly low and capital cannot be raised from the market for a necessary investment project, the city banks and other financial institutions within the group will meet the fund demand of the company concerned *(Sakakibara 1993; 16.* My italics).[13]

Sakakibara clearly states that this relationship between companies leads to the interests of the group as a whole being greater than individual companies, or individual stockholders. We should also include individual investors, because it was the sacrificing of individual investors in order to compensate favoured clients, which were invariably *keiretsu* members, which caused much of the outcry among the general public. Consequently, we can see that this was common practice which was then regarded as malpractice by the general public in the aftermath of the Bubble.

With the rise of cross-shareholding, the level of individual investors has slowly been dropping, from a figure of about 60% in 1955, a level comparable to the US, to a current level of between 20%-30% (Shimada 1992). Correspondingly, as the quotation above reveals, the importance of the individual shareholder has also declined. In addition to this, the Securities and Exchange Commission, which was established after WWII by the New Dealers was subsequently absorbed into the Ministry of Finance. These structural arrangements reduced the power of the individual as shareholder and allowed for planning and execution of economic policy effectively away from the public view.

*******

The next point to consider is the relationship between capital and industry in Japan. The most striking aspect of capital investment in Japan in the post-war period, up to and including the present, "is the existence of a financial system overwhelmingly dominated by indirect finance" (Sakakibara 1993; 17), that is, primarily from savings schemes and co-operatives. In addition to this high level of personal financial assets supporting the economy, these assets are not in the

[13]Quoted from 'The Economic Role of Financial Corporate Grouping' by Iwao Nakatani in M.Aoki (ed) *The Economic Analysis of the Japanese Firm* (North Holland.1984)

hands of only a few major banks, but are spread out across regional banks, agricultural co-operatives, fishing co-operatives, postal savings, *sōgo* banks (mutual co-operative banks), credit unions and worker's credit unions. In 1988, 40% of the overall aggregate of total and financial debentures[14] was from these small and medium-sized financial institutions, in other words, was the savings of small individual investors:

> Competitive relations in the fund-raising arena, among the postal savings scheme, the agricultural co-operatives, and private financial institutions in particular - made it impossible for the major financial institutions to exercise oligopolistic control. The result was fierce competition within the government's regulated framework. This competition, coupled with the sheer size of the postal savings system and the agricultural co-ops, is probably one of the reasons behind the high savings rate in Japan (*Sakakibara 1993: 20*).

I disagree with Sakakibara that the structure of the 'fund-raising arena' was responsible for the high savings rate in Japan. In the early 1950s, the Japanese people were encouraged to save in order to finance the rebuilding of Japan. It was the policy of successive governments to encourage people to save 'in the national interest', for this reason.[15]

This fierce competition which characterises the fundraising side of the finance industry is in stark opposition to the compartmentalized division of the industry on the investment side, characterised by the cross-shareholding corporate structure outlined above, in which oligopolistic control was guarded by the 'Big Four' securities houses; Nomura, Daiwa, Nikko, and Yamaichi. But the logic of the system is contained within its raison d'être, the Japanese government fostered a culture of savers among the population as part of their overall economic strategy. Domestic consumer spending before the late eighties was significantly lower than other industrialised economies, and overall still remains so. Also, even during the Bubble, the level of consumer credit was 'trivial' (Sakakibara 1993), and still is, although, more recently this is most likely due to the prolonged recession. The national strategy, until very recently, has been to restrict domestic spending, foster saving, and target export markets, although Itoh (1992) argues that the level of exports as a percentage of GDP was similar to other industrial economies over most of the post-WWII period. Nevertheless, as a means of gathering and distributing capital to fund the growth and viability of the economy, and to secure the position of Japan in the world, the system worked very well until 'speculation mania' gripped the business community, and, against a backdrop of worsening global economic conditions, which began to adversely affect the economy, more and more Japanese began to feel that they were being exploited.

The statistics and comments concerning personal wealth mentioned in 1.1 indicate that most people do not feel well-off, and are disenchanted with their standard of living. When these facts are taken into consideration, together with the various points outlined above, the causes of the outrage felt by the Japanese people, the extent of the betrayal of trust by the leaders of the Japanese economic community, and the implication of government ministers and departments of acting self-interestedly, begins to become apparent.

---

[14]**Debenture.** A bond of a company or corporation acknowledging a debt and providing for payment of interest at fixed intervals. *OED.*

[15]Bellah (1985) tells us that 'encouraging production and discouraging consumption' characterised Neo-Confucian-derived economic policy during the Tokugawa period (1600-1868). A past in which diligence and parsimony were ethically weighted positively, would have undoubtedly made it much easier for the governments of the post-WWII period to implement their policy of encouraging saving 'in the national interest'.

When the Bubble burst, the relationship between the securities industry, the banking and manufacturing industries, government and the bureaucracy, was exposed to public and international scrutiny. The structures that coalesced after WWII and which went on to achieve spectacular results in a continually expanding global economy, were unable to continue to achieve the same performance in a mature economy after an economic speculative crash. Since November 1989, when the first indication of questionable practice in the securities industry came to light, the role of the 'iron triangle', that is, government, the bureaucracy, and industry, in creating the legal framework and the moral climate in which the Japanese economy has existed for the past fifty years, has been exposed.

The extent of the shock and ruin as experienced by people as citizens, small investors, and as employees, comes down to essentially two facts, which are as follows. First, favoured clients of the financial and securities industry have been compensated for losses in the financial markets. Not just recently in the wake of the Bubble bursting, but for many years. Secondly, one of the main sources of credit that built the Japanese economy came from small investors. This basic, if simplistic equation of favoured clients, exclusively corporations, being compensated from the purses of small savers, who have in turn suffered at the hands of industry and the government in the aftermath of the Bubble, has outraged the Japanese public. But even in the face of this outrage, the government, the bureaucracy, and even industry, is virtually powerless to act to repair the damage because of standing obligations binding the top of society. The Japanese elite may be more than aware of the threat to their legitimacy caused by their response, even more so with a long recession fanning the flames of dissatisfaction, but they are both powerless as much as they are unwilling to act. Their legitimacy looks increasingly fragile, but the obligations which exist within the networks at the top, make it very difficult for them to act, even if they wanted to (1.3). Stall and hope the storm, both economic and ethical, blows over, has been the policy of government and the bureaucracy in the period 1991 to 1998. The collapse of Yamaichi Securities in the Autumn of 1997 may prove to be a pivotal moment, for it is clear to all that if one of Japan's blue chip companies has spent the last six years trying to delay the inevitable, the storm might still only be brewing. This sentiment is confirmed by a number of Japanese analysts, interviewed by BBC News at the time of the Yamaichi collapse, who predicted a wave of major corporate bankruptcies during 1998.

I will describe in detail what the arrangements between the securities companies and their corporate clients were in the next section. It will suffice to repeat here that a different set of arrangements existed for ordinary investors. Those employees of the securities companies who made the deals were not simply suffering from what Uekusa (1991) called 'the myth of rising prices', which I mentioned in 1.1, but were conducting business as usual:

> Industry executives appear not to have noticed the clamour when ordinary investors began to vent their indignation at the favoritism shown to big clients. After selling shares of Nippon Telegraph and Telephone [NTT] to millions of individuals, they were deaf to the complaints when the price of shares plummeted. By rights they should all have resigned when the bottom fell out of the stock market, taking responsibility for the enormous losses suffered by investors, but none even considered this possibility (*Okumura 1991: 18*).

The government are heavily implicated in the NTT example, as well: "It is no secret that the [Finance] Ministry intervened to jack up the price at which the NTT shares were sold to the

public" (Okumura 1991: 21). Far from protecting the public, the authorities treated the public terribly. Millions of Japanese put their life-savings into investments which they were categorically told were safe. Consistent with this, consumer protection is virtually non-existent in Japan, and there is no recourse through the law for these investors. They were totally at the mercy of salespersons who had no legal obligation, or felt any moral obligation, it seems, to inform potential investors that shares can fall as well as rise, and that their investment is not protected if share prices fall. On the contrary, with the tacit support of the government of the day, ordinary people were urged to buy into the 'myth of rising prices', at unfavourable levels engineered by the Ministry of Finance. Okumura describes how shares were sold in Japan prior to the Bubble collapse:

> [T]he object is to cultivate as many submissive customers as possible. Neither the buyer or seller needs any specialised knowledge. The sales personnel simply tell the prospective customers that because such and such a stock is being recommended by their firm, it is bound to rise in value. And in fact this is exactly what generally did happen, since the massive orders resulting from the campaign were sufficient to drive the stock's price higher. Sometimes, of course, the price would fall instead, but in that event the securities house would send a new sales force into the field to regain the confidence of its customers (*Okumura 1991: 19*).

In contrast to the manner in which they treated ordinary investors, the securities companies went to considerable ends to compensate their favoured clients (Okumura1992). Under Article 50 of the Securities and Exchange Law, it is illegal to promise clients in advance that losses will be covered in the event that they occur. However, these laws were essentially for the benefit of foreign financial operations and their clients, in order to maintain confidence in the Japanese market. In actual fact, these regulations were ignored by Japanese financial institutions, with the full knowledge of the Ministry of Finance.

*******

### 1.3) Corruption or business as usual? *Seken, Ōyake,* and the Public Domain

This section argues that it was not the structure, practices, or codes of conduct within industry or between industry and government which changed and caused the public to regard codes of conduct and practices to be corrupt. Instead, the Bubble crash exposed inherent weaknesses in the public domain, causing significant changes in attitudes and values which had been developing among the population as a whole (Sengoku 1991; Ijiri 1991), to become polarized and to be revealed.

> The securities scams were not, in many cases, strictly illegal, setting them apart from the instances of embezzlement and forged certificates of deposit that have been uncovered in the banking industry. Providing reimbursement for losses, it transpires, evolved into an accepted practice in the context of the cozy relationships among brokerages, big businesses and the government's supervisory organs. Now that this practice has been brought to light, however, the need for reform is apparent to everybody (*Takeuchi.1991: 8*).

The public perceived particular codes of conduct and practices to be corrupt, certainly, but we have to ask why, when these codes of conduct and practices had not only been in place for many years, but also mirrored codes of conduct and practice widespread throughout Japanese society. The allegations of corruption were then validated by the view from abroad that these practices and codes of conduct were indeed corrupt. The reason for this view from abroad being what it was is essentially two-fold: (1) By trading standards in the U.S., Europe, and other countries who have followed stock exchange trading guidelines in those countries, the Japanese financial industry acted unethically; and (2) foreign firms were seeking an opportunity to maximize their own business by casting their competitors in Japan, and a rival bourse, as corrupt and a bad risk. First of all though, I want to demonstrate that these codes of conduct and practices did not change during the Bubble, that is during the period 1985 to 1991, but instead developed slowly through the post WWII period, and can be traced back to the early years of the Meiji period (1868-1912) and beyond.

Until public anger forced the Ministry of Finance to issue 'administrative guidance' (Tanaka 1991), with a directive that banned loss-covering payments, all these practices developed within an economy whose industrial culture successive Liberal Democratic Party (*jimintō*) governments fostered, and within legislation that these governments enacted, from time to time, over the post-war years. Article 50 of the Securities and Exchange Law prohibits brokers from promising clients in advance that they will cover losses that may occur. Yet the practice was so widespread it was the norm. What brokers did was not to promise compensation in the event that losses occurred, but instead they promised profits on investments, and in the cases where those profits were not achieved, compensation was made. In the post-war period, during which the economy was constantly expanding, losses were minimal and 'compensation', in a variety of forms, was made by employing various ways of circumventing the law (Okumura 1991). This was with the open agreement of the authorities "who see their job as protecting and nurturing

industry" (Tanaka 1991: 13). Tanaka refers to these schemes of guaranteed profit as '*zai*-tech', financial technology':

> Working hand in hand, banks and securities houses persuaded corporate managers to borrow money from banks for investments in stocks and bonds, assuring their customers that the yields for the securities would more than cover the interest on the loans. Intrigued by this alchemy, companies rushed to take advantage of it. Generally, they put the borrowed funds into so-called *eigyō tokkin* (discretionary accounts) that the brokerages manage on their behalf (*Tanaka 1991: 11*).

For Okumura (1991), the internal structure of the securities companies, as well as the structural relationship between companies within the same *keiretsu* , also explains why favoured clients were compensated. In Japan, securities companies are both underwriters and brokers, which creates conflicts of interests, but which is offset by valuable information collected by both divisions being available to the other. However, the 'discretionary accounts (*eigyō tokkin*)' were accounts that were brokered by the underwriting division as a sort of side business, and when, after the crash, promises made could not be kept, the whole of the underwriting business was threatened by these discretionary accounts:

> Delivering on these promises presented no problem as long as the stock market was on a roll...but it proved to be impossible during the market tailspin in 1990. Far from generating the promised yields, the discretionary accounts shrank. The corporate [underwriting] departments were desperate to make up for their losses. The customers were not just big investors, they were the same corporations the departments depended on for their underwriting business...To stay on the good side of their clients, the corporate departments were thus ready to accept some red ink in their operation of the discretionary accounts in order to cover the clients' losses. It is this scheme that has become the compensation scandal's central issue (*Okumura.1991:18*).

In the response to public anger, deals that contained 'yield guarantees (*rimawari hoshō*)' were banned underan 'administrative directive'. However, the industry ignored this 'directive', almost certainly with the knowledge of the Ministry of Finance (Tanaka 1991). This has subsequently been substantiated by accusations by senior, unnamed, former employees of Yamaichi Securities, accusing Matsuno Nobuhiko, then director general of the Finance Ministry's securities bureau (Hashimoto Ryutarō, the recent Prime Minister, was Minister of Finance at the time) of 'instructing' Yamaichi how to keep losses off the books through *tōbashi* transactions[16] (Bloomberg 16/4/1998). The banning of yield guarantees was to restore confidence in the system among the Japanese public and among foreign investors, but the directive was quietly waived in order to protect the industry and the economy itself. Previously these guarantees were regarded as legal, although they were always on the edge of the law. Consequently, deals that contained yield guarantees were not put in writing but closed with a handshake. These deals were called 'handshake deals (*nigiri tokkin*)'. According to Okumura, terms such as *rimawari hoshō*and *nigiri tokkin* or *nigiri*, are part of the Kabuto-chō[17] jargon and have been for years, and that "there was no way the Ministry's officials could have been ignorant of such a long-established and widely acknowledged practice" (Okumura 1991: 20). It is quite clear that a culture of promising to compensate favoured clients was one of a number of wealth generating schemes that developed within horizontal *keiretsu* (Hamada 1992) during the post-WWII period. That is, between

[16]*Tobashi* transactions refer to the practice of keeping losses off the books by moving losses between companies with different reporting periods, in order to avoid disclosing losses in end-of-year financial accounts. The Ministry of Finance was long suspected of being involved in this kind of murky '*zai*-tech' activity.
[17]Kabuto-chō is the area of Tokyo where the stock exchange is located.

companies linked horizontally, through banks and financial institutions (1.2).

By looking at what legislation was introduced over the post-WWII period, together with when it was introduced, Tanaka (1991) believes that successive Japanese governments never acted unless Japanese long-term interests were threatened: the rationale behind all legislation being to protect the politico-industrial alliance over and above the general public. Tanaka argues that, if the interests of government and industry was not threatened, no action would be taken, and when action has been necessary, tighter governmental control has been introduced. Consequently, government has not only been implicated in the 'corruption', but is seen to have masterminded it. The spate of arrests of Ministry of Finance officials in late 1997 and early 1998 would seem to corroborate this. However, the question still remains: was it corruption? If we define corruption as a deviation from the norm, then I think we can say that it was not corruption, but 'business as usual'. So much so, that Okumura notes that even when the secret accounts used for compensating favoured clients were first discovered a full two years before the crash, in 1989, while Tokyo tax evasion officers were investigating a Daiwa executive, the press and the public didn't take much interest in it:

> Even at the time of the Daiwa scandal, people were saying that the other securities houses were doing much the same thing. But the press chose not to pursue the story....they may have assumed that compensating clients was a time-honoured practice that goes on relatively openly (*Okumura 1991: 17*).

Even though these practices and codes of conduct can reasonably be interpreted as 'business as usual', the line between acceptable practice and 'corruption' in relations between public servants and business, and between businesses, has increasingly been contested in recent years in Japan. *Torihiki* (literally 'taking and pulling', but translated as 'transactions' or 'dealings')[18] is just one example. The person who explained *torihiki* to me, described it as 'under the table dealings'. He simultaneously demonstrated this by moving his hands back and forth under the table. He said this was the way politics and business works in Japan, and most people understand that and accept it, "although they are not happy about it". Then there is the concept of *nemawashi* (literally meaning 'to dig around the root) which refers to the practice of laying the groundwork for a deal, or closing a deal, behind closed doors. Another example of 'acceptable practice' increasingly being viewed as corruption, is *sanban* which Kent (1992) describes as the three things a Japanese politician requires to be effective: 'financial resources (*kaban*)', 'influence and reputation (*kanban*)', and 'organised support (*jiban*)'. Kent also notes the changes to the traditional base of a politician's power, which she considers to be a cause of the confusion that gave rise to practices once viewed as 'expressions of gratitude (*orei*)' being increasingly perceived as 'bribery (*wairo*)', and defined as 'corruption (*oshoku*)'. She describes how people she questioned indicated that influence and money were essential if politicians were to be effective, even though they then went on to criticise them. Discussing 'organised support (*jiban*)', Kent remarks:

> Organised support (*jiban*) that was once based on communities...is now having to shift its mode of organisation to a greater dependence on associations such as *kōenkai* (support groups for individual politicians), and support from companies, trade unions and the like...[T]he need for *kaban* - resources - and *kanban* - influence - has not decreased at all; if anything it has multiplied many times (*Kent.1992:109*).

[18] *Kenkyusha 5th Edition. Ed. Koh Masuda*

Kent argues that with the move away from community-based support, the power base of a politician also shifts. As a result, the needs of his sponsors will also be different, and so in the eyes of communities, their local representatives are judged to be acting, not in their interests but in the interests of their new sponsors, which is what happens. Reforms intended to make politicians more accountable to ordinary people began to be implemented by the Hosokawa Government in 1994, but after Hosokawa resigned in 1994 the reforms ground to a halt.

The question of politicians 'acting in the public's interest' is central to understanding why the public were so angry. The collapse of the Bubble and the ensuing 'scandals' threw government, the bureaucracy, and industry, 'the iron triangle', into direct conflict with the public. Before the Bubble, throughout the post-WWII period, exactly the same codes of conduct, strategies, manipulations, and practices, had been going on continually, only such actions and ethics had never come into open conflict with the interests of so many members of the general public. In fact these ethics and actions could be seen to be clearly in the national interest, which gave them their moral authority. This indicates very well that Japan still does not have an established absolute moral order (Abe 1994; 1995), essential for the coherence and smooth running of a nation state, but that instead, morality is still quite situational. It is the conflict between the perception of an absolute moral authority, enshrined in the concept of the nation-state and a civil society, and evident in a body of legislation to protect ordinary citizens as individuals, and the reality of the situational affiliated group-orientated moral framework of *seken*, that was brutally exposed by the collapse of the Bubble.

Kent might well be right when she says that changes in the focus of interest may be responsible for 'expressions of gratitude (*orei*)' being interpreted as 'bribery (*wairō*)'. Certainly, it would appear that the public only regarded these codes and practices as corrupt when they did not regard them as being in their interest. However, I think that the clash of values and ideals which results from having these two moral frameworks, one absolute and one situational, is the root cause of the problem. The outcry in the aftermath of the Bubble indicates a level of confusion and misunderstanding that goes beyond sour grapes, which I believe only clashing values and codes of conduct can engender and explain.

It is quite evident that the practices within the various financial institutions, together with the practices which existed between financial institutions, other commercial enterprises, government and bureaucracy, were not unusual. Certainly laws were broadly interpreted, but again, this is not unusual in Japan, where 'deals and transactions (*torihiki*)', and 'behind the scenes negotiating (*nemawashi*)' have been the accepted way of doing business. Such a way of doing business requires the law to be broad and open to interpretation. In other words, to be deliberately hazy. However, in the case of Japan, this has been necessary, not in order to sanction or accomodate malpractice or unethical behaviour, but in order to accommodate the nation's situational morality. The idea of 'common law', that is, a law which binds all citizens, fits uneasily with the structure of Japanese society, and particularly with the moral and ethical framework of the country.

State structures as enshrined in the idea of a 'civil society', imported from Europe and America during the Meiji Era (1868-1912), were grafted onto Japanese society where concepts of 'public' and 'private', as enshrined in the idea of a civil society (Giddens 1971), did not exist. Doi (1973) alerts us to the inconsistencies of the idea of 'public' in Japan, as he discusses the problematic alignment of 'inside (*uchi*)' and 'outside (*soto*), with 'private' and 'public', together with the problematic use of the word that was used to translate 'public', which was *õyake*. And it is in the confusion over these four domains, 'inside', 'outside', 'private', and 'public', that the allegations of corruption and of unfairness can be located and understood.

The Western idea of 'public', as enshrined in the idea of a civil society, sits uncomfortably with the Japanese concept of 'public', known as *õyake*. *Õyake* was the word chosen to translate the English word 'public' in the Meiji Era (Doi 1973), but was never very suitable. *Õyake* was the term for the Imperial family, and was chosen because, in a nation where persons were not regarded as sovereign individuals equal as members of a public domain, but were instead affiliates of 'affiliated groups (*shozoku shuudan*)', the Imperial family was the only one of these 'collective selves' that could conceivably represent all the others. At least since the demise of the Emperor as the ruler of a united Japan in the 11th Century A.D., after which the country was dominated by warring clans, the primary social grouping in the consciousness of the Japanese people has not been a national polity, but many clan-like groups. This pluralistic social structure was subjugated to a nation-like polity during the Tokugawa Era (1600-1868), by disarming the samurai and through strict Neo-Confucian-dominated governance. But loyalty and allegiance was never primarily to the Shõgun during this time, even. Allegiance and loyalty were to one's lord, who in turn pledged allegiance to the Shõgun. After the Restoration of the Meiji Emperor, the Meiji Government, by means of the exhaustive propagation of the ideology of *kokutai* ('one nation, one body, under one divine Emperor'), ruthlessly enforced a national polity (Gluck 1984; Irokawa 1985; Hall et al 1988), which reached its nadir in the ultra-nationalism of the 1930s and 1940s. But again, as in the Tokugawa period, loyalty to the emperor was expressed through diligence at work and in the community, through loyalty to the individual's immediate master. With the demise of the emperor in 1945, the Japanese company, not the individual, has emerged as the primary self in the post-WWII period. The pluralist society has again reasserted itself, with the 'affiliated group', invariably 'the company', as the primary social entity (Nakane 1970; Okumura 1992; Abe 1994, 1995):

> In Japan, the concept of 'citizen (*shimin*)' does not exist. This is a little overstated, but generally speaking, the idea of 'citizen' isn't fixed (*teichaku shiteimasen*). Rather than citizens, it is 'affiliation' which becomes important (*shimin de aru yorimo shozoku ga mondai ni naru kara desu*)...For example, the Japanese always ask about affiliation first (*shozoku wo mazu kiku wake desu*)... When things are not fixed or settled (*ochitsukanai wake de*), Japanese want to know who they are dealing with before anything else. "What company do you work for" etc. is without a doubt what they want to hear (*Abe 1994: 64 my translation*).

So, *õyake* may mean 'public', but it is in fact an interest group like any other, which will always put the interests of its members first. This is the structure and morality of *seken*, which governs to some considerable extent, the motivations and actions of the Japanese people (Inoue 1977; Abe 1994, 1995). In Kodansha's *Nihongo Daijiten* (1989) under the second entry, *õyake* is described as *seken*, and as Abe tells us very clearly: "What benefits *seken* gets priority over everything else

*(sono seken no zoku shiteiru mono no rieki wo, nani yorimo yusen shite kangaeru kara desu)*" (Abe 1994: 61). Consequently, because *õyake* is *seken*, the potential for the public domain to be compromised, in the event that the interests of *õyake* and the public domain conflict, was always very real.

It is *seken* which dictates not only that social space in Japan cannot unquestioningly be thought of as 'public' and 'private', but it is also the structure of *seken* which has mitigated against the establishment of a public domain and individual rights. *Seken* is inherently factional, which is why *õyake* is factional, and which in turn, explains why the present LDP-led government is unwilling to act 'in the public interest'. Herein lies both the unsuitability of the term *õyake* to describe 'public', and the reason for the weakness of the public domain in Japan. *Õyake*, as 'the public', has, since the Meiji Restoration, been represented by the Government, but it has remained a faction consisting of government, bureaucracy, and senior business leaders, controlled by the Liberal Democratic Party (*jiminto*) throughout the post WWII period until just after the Bubble, the time when the dangers of an underdeveloped public domain, and the dangers of having *õyake* fulfill that role were properly revealed. Prime Minister Hosokawa, who headed the subsequent coalition Government, tried to reform the electoral system in order to override factionalism by creating a stronger public domain, but factionalism, in the form of those who wanted to maintain the status quo, brought him down. Since his demise, the LDP have managed to claw their way back into power, which has left the electorate demoralised and the country verging on economic crisis. This is in no small part because the LDP-led government is resisting necessary change. To all outside observers, and many inside Japan, this policy is perceived to be totally against the interests of the nation, and it is. However, this is to misunderstand the structure of *õyake*.

Macfarlane (1990) draws our attention to Max Weber placing 'enormous' importance on the dissolution of kinship systems and similar clan-like factions in Europe, as "[this] formed one of the preconditions for the development of public law" (Macfarlane 1990: 112). This is certainly true of modern Japan, where public law has not been properly established because of the dominance of *seken*. The creation of a nation state with a national polity was not carried out properly by the Meiji Government, as they themselves sought to control *õyake*. And again, after WWII, the 'half-hearted' efforts of the Occupying Forces to implement a new constitution and new instruments of the state were soon reformed 'to suit Japan's special circumstances' (Tanaka 1991). Abe (1994) describes the constitution and the electoral system, built on the concept of *õyake* and *seken* as a 'false facade':

> The constitution is basically a false facade (*uso wo iu tatemae*), and as the constitution is such a false facade, the electoral system is operating under this facade. However, the modern flesh and blood individual does not operate under this facade. From the Meiji Era onwards, the Western idea of the self (*jikõ*) has existed in Japan, and it has been according to this notion of *jikõ* that the self has developed, particularly among scholars. However, as flesh and blood human beings living day to day - mother and child, friends, teachers, or in cases when meeting with colleagues from work, none of these relationships can be described in terms of the Western individual. Rather, the circumstances for the expression of the traditional Japanese self, that is for the expression of a man or a woman under a system of hierarchy, are overwhelming...When we talk about this kind of thing, these tightly bound relationships fall within the sphere of *seken* (*Abe 1994: 58; my translation*).

Over the post WWII period, what benefited the custodians of *õyake* was regarded by the vast

majority of the public as in the public interest, simply because the nation as a whole benefited from the interests of *ōyake*. This created the illusion that the interests of *ōyake* were also the interests of the general public, which in turn served to substantiate the illusion that *ōyake* was the general public. This was always a fragile and potentially disastrous facade, or 'lie', to translate Abe (1994: 58) literally. If a situation were ever to arise where *ōyake* as a faction had to protect itself and its interests, then the 'lie' of *ōyake* as encompassing the public domain and protecting the 'public good' was bound to be revealed. When the Bubble collapsed, this is exactly what happened. The codes of conduct and the practices which developed within and between the corporations, and between corporations, the bureaucracy, and government, were all directed towards maximizing the interests of *seken*: in this case, the interests of *ōyake*.

The sense of unfairness among the general population was compounded by mass individual share ownership, which developed through the late 1980s. All individual shareholders who bought shares did so by written contract, which is how the government and the financial industry justified their decision not to reimburse ordinary investors. This was in stark contrast to the 'handshake deals (*rimawari hoshō*)' which characterised so many of the corporate transactions, which were not written contract deals but deals bound by *seken* rules. As I described in 1.2, individual investors were not told that they could lose their investments if the price of their shares dropped, and were in fact told their shares would rise. When ordinary investor's shares crashed and they attempted to recover some compensation, on the basis that the sales staff of the securities companies had told them they would not lose money, they were told to read their contracts and were summarily ignored. This was malpractice on a grand scale and it has caused many people hardship, but what worried people more was the fact that the limitations of *ōyake* as the public domain had been exposed, and exposed as a particular *seken* protecting and maximizing its own interests while masquerading as the 'public good'. The acts of the securities companies and their staff towards their customers was also a classic example of *seken* protecting its interests over all else. These were deeply unsettling discoveries for a nation which regarded written contracts as only necessary in societies where 'individualism (*kojinshugi*)' is predominant. However, even though most people were aware that *ōyake* was not the same as 'public', nobody imagined that the custodians of *ōyake*, that is the government, would put their own interests, which included the interests of their confidants and paymasters, over the interests of the general public. It is this final point which has not only driven the desire for change among the Japanese people, but which explains the strength of their desire. It also explains the confusion, as everybody: government, corporations, and the general public, were all invoking both kinds of moral guidelines in order to protect their interests.

Responsibility for the confusion lies with government, who deliberately acted in order to maximize their own interests, even though this was presented as in the national interest. Due to the structure and ethical framework of *ōyake*, the interests of government conflicted with the interests of the public domain. Tanaka (1991) tells us that it is not as if the opportunity to develop a public domain did not exist at one time. It did, but it was carefully avoided in order to preserve the status quo:

The Japanese started off the post-war period driven by a determination to liberate themselves from the fetters of a military state, but few people at the time saw a similar need to alter the norms of public morality. The attitudes towards the government-led state that had formed in the pre-war and wartime period survived the war intact...In the absence of new thinking on the role of public service, the government eventually scrapped or watered down many of the reforms instituted by the U.S. Occupation authorities, claiming that they did not suit Japan's 'special national circumstances'. One example is the Securities and Exchange Law. Though it was modelled on American law that has ample provisions for protecting investors and compelling companies to disclose information, it has not been enforced in this way. The securities and exchange commission that was set up was disbanded before it could go into operation. Today, when the costs of land and housing have risen beyond the ordinary individual's reach in major urban areas, when the gap between rich and poor is greatly widening, and when the securities market, the core of the capitalist system, is riddled with corruption, the shortcomings to the traditional approach to serving the public interest have come home to roost. (*Tanaka.1991:15*)

*******

## Conclusion

Abe. as part of his argument that *seken* is the primary organising principle in Japanese society (Abe 1994), asserts that the Western concept of the individual has not taken root in Japan. I do not intend to try and prove or disprove this, but what I contend, is that a Japanese concept of the individual, one which has been an integral part of Japanese concepts of the self at least since the Medieval period (Ikegami 1995), has been emerging through the Modern Era, and that the collapse of the Bubble, by revealing *õyake* to be an interest group of *seken*-like structure, whose interests are always potentially in opposition to the public interest, has provided new impetus and legitimacy for the development of a Japanese concept of individual rights and a public domain. Japan has been a nation state for over a hundred years, it has the trappings of State, and it has national discourses and institutions. It also has common law. This has resulted in a state consciousness among the Japanese people. In other words, a sense of a public domain which is irreconcilable with the concepts of *seken* and *õyake* has existed in Japan since the Meiji period. During most of the post-WWII period, a morality based on the Western idea of a civil society sat comfortably with the moral guidelines enshrined in the concepts of *seken*, and of affiliated group (*shozoku shuudan*). However, the potential for conflict was always there, and has slowly built up with the growth of a consciousness of nationhood and individual rights, since the formation of the modern Japanese state by the Meiji administration, and then again by the Occupying Forces between 1945 and 1948. The collapse of the Bubble has not only given impetus and legitimacy to the establishment of an effective public domain, however. It has also given impetus and legitimacy to the establishment and development of a new individualism. In the following chapters, I will begin to describe why and how this new individualism and new sense of community is emerging.

*******

## 2. The Collapse of 'The Lifetime Employment System'?

### 1) Anthropological Representations of 'Lifetime Employment'
### 2) The 'Society of Industry' and the Mechanism of Increasing Immobility
### 3) 'Lifetime Employment' After The Bubble
### 4) From a 'Company-Centred Society' to a 'People-Centred Society'

This chapter begins to look at the changing position of the workplace and of companies in the lives of persons in Japan. The workplace has been, and still is, the primary 'nodal point of identity' (Kondo 1990) in Japan, and consequently both case studies are approached from the position of the workplace. So central is the workplace in defining selves, both individual and collective, in Japan, that we can speculate that any changes to workplace ethics and practice adopted by Japan's most prestigious companies are likely to redefine the model citizen, through a redefinition of the model employee.

In the various contributions to the debate on changing workplace ethics and practices in the aftermath of the Bubble, the changes have been conceptualised primarily in two ways: one, as the 'unravelling' or 'collapse' of the 'lifetime employment system'; the other as a shift from a 'company-centred' society to a 'people-centred' society. Before engaging with these debates and discussions, however, it is necessary to come to some consensus on what the 'lifetime employment system' is. Anthropological representations of 'lifetime employment' and 'the lifetime employment system' have never been clearly enunciated, and have focused far too heavily on length of tenure in both defining 'the lifetime employment system', and in judging its ubiquity, so that we have arrived at a point where the most recent descriptions have reduced it to what Kondo refers to as a 'conceptual slippage' (Kondo 1990) and what Hamada refers to as a 'myth' (Hamada 1992).

To talk of the 'lifetime employment system' collapsing in Japan in the aftermath of the Bubble is not to talk about changes to a particular working practice confined to a select number of male employees, as anthropological representations might have us believe. Talk of the 'lifetime employment system' collapsing, or more accurately, being dismantled, refers to a comprehensive redefining of work ethics and practices which will impact on the whole of society. Anthropological representations also suggest an 'industrial dualism', whereby the work ethics and practices in companies which are perceived to operate a 'lifetime employment' policy have come to be regarded

as generically different from those which don't. In this chapter, I will argue that continuity and consistency of ethics and practice exists across companies of all sizes, with 'large' company work ethics and practices defining work ethics and practices across society as a whole, and that any changes to 'large' company work ethics and practices will have important ramifications for all workplaces, large or small.

Taking a lead from Clark's (1979) 'society of industry', I suggest that such a 'society' also generates a mechanism which engenders immobility in the upper echelons. In other words, which generates a higher incidence of 'lifetime employment' in the upper echelons, regardless of whether a company is perceived to operate a 'lifetime employment' policy. Utilitarian motives can be seen to be working to engender labour immobility, or 'lifetime employment', at the upper end of the scale, and labour mobility at the lower end, in both cases mediated by the same social conventions and cultural ideals. Employees in small and medium enterprises also stay with their employers for long periods of time, suggesting that 'lifetime employment' is not only a characteristic of 'large' companies, but is a consequence of social convention and cultural ideals across society as a whole, mediated by personal job satisfaction, utilitarian motive, and labour market dynamics.

This is followed by a consideration of the various voices who argue that 'lifetime employment' will continue to be a key feature of Japanese workplaces after the Bubble, although in a more restricted way. 'Lifetime employment' looks likely to survive in a more restricted form, with less, if any, particular cachet attached to it, and as part of a new matrix of work ethics and practices, promoting individual initiative and responsibility.

I end the chapter by looking at 'company centrism', which is not only a better model than 'the lifetime employment system' for conceptualising and understanding Japanese working practices since WWII, it is also better suited to conceptualising and understanding the changes in work ethics and practices which are occurring in Japan after the Bubble. One of the major ways in which these changes are being conceptualised and discussed among the Japanese themselves, is as a shift from a 'company-centred' society to a 'people-centred' society. This refers to both a trend and the desire to diminish the role of the workplace in governing people's lives and in defining their sense of self. As will become apparent over subsequent chapters, this is already happening, and is in no small part being driven by the emergence of a recognisably Japanese individualism.

*******

## 2.1) Anthropological Representations of Lifetime Employment

In this section, I will argue that the term 'lifetime employment' has, over time, come to obscure a whole series of working practices and codes of conduct which are situated in and play an important part in legitimating values and attitudes within society as a whole: what in Japan are referred to as *kyōtsuu suru bubun*, 'those things we think and do which are common to all'. James C. Abegglen first commented on the distinctiveness of 'lifetime commitment' in large Japanese workplaces, generating a lot of debate and criticism with his book *The Japanese Factory, Aspects of Its Social Organisation* (1958). But his critics in the 1960s, following an obsession with comparing Japan and the U.S. (Hendry 1996), were more interested in the statistical evidence which suggested that the number of employees who stayed with the same company in Japan was statistically insignificant compared to the U.S. (Taira 1962, Marsh and Mannari 1971, Levine 1983). The current anthropological understanding of 'lifetime employment' can be traced back directly to the conclusions drawn from these very restricted comparative statistical analyses, which had a very limited agenda: to emphasize similarities between Japanese and the U.S working practices.

Abegglen was the first person to draw our attention to what has subsequently been called 'the lifetime employment system'. He discusses 'lifetime commitment' (Abegglen 1958: 11) as a *rule*, and clearly describes it as a *relationship* between employee and firm (Abegglen 1958: 11), which, he states, involves much more than the length of time a person is employed by a given company: "The area of mutual interchangeability of responsibility and obligation goes considerably beyond the regulations and practices governing employment and dismissal" (Abegglen 1958: 17). Abegglen himself chose to concentrate on the limited area of employment and dismissal, but only in this chapter. He states categorically that other factors exist and are important, and goes on to consider them in detail. His work on reward and pay structures is rarely quoted by his critics, but still stands as an excellent piece of methodical scholarship. Later on, Abegglen does give the practices engendered by 'the mutual interchangeability of responsibility and obligation', a name, referring to the company employment practices and ideals he writes about as 'this permanent employment system' (Abegglen 1958: 24), but it has been through the work of those who responded directly to Abegglen, such as Taira (1962), Tsuda (1965), Karsh and Cole (1968), and Marsh and Mannari (1971), that these practices and ideals became conflated into one system focusing on length of employment as the defining and indexical feature of a complex matrix of ideas, ethics and practices. Abegglen singled out 'lifetime commitment' as *a*, not *the* distinctive feature of working practices in Japan. A distortion has occurred, and this has been reproduced in recent years.

Abegglen had the following to say in 1958, pre-empting many of his critics and making a very important point in the last sentence:

> The description of job relations given here is held to describe large factories of Japan. In a few types of industries, notably in construction and shipbuilding, worker recruitment and intraplant relations differ somewhat from those described in this

> report. Also, in the smaller and specialized shops of the large cities (e.g. in printing), movement of a worker from one job to another is common or accepted. ..{W]here the proportion of female workers is high...the rate of employee exit is high, *which does not, however, alter the nature of the commitment of worker and company through the employment period.* (*Abegglen 1958: 13*. My italics).

In this passage, Abegglen clearly states that length of tenure does not dictate the type of relationship which exists between employees, or between an employee and their company, and that the opposite is true: the length of the employment period has no bearing on 'the nature of commitment' between employee and company.

Writing in the 1950's, Abbeglen brought a clearly Durkheimian approach to the subject. He sees the ethics and practices of the large enterprises he studied as being a product of the commitment to permanent employment: "[T]he permanent relationship between employee and firm *imposes* obligations and responsibilities on both the factory and the worker" (Abegglen 1958: 11. My italics). The reality is more complex, and is more a case of all employees being bound by a range of obligations and responsibilities, which engender a commitment to a permanent relationship on both parties over the established employment period, through the ways of thinking (*kangaekata*) and ways of doing (*shikata*) of individuals. Through the acts of individual selves, obligations and coercion are revealed. This is conveyed by Rohlen (1974) when he tells us:

> Only a rare person in [the company] has never considered quitting. Most consider it seriously enough to speak to others about it. Few, however, actually quit. The problem then is to consider not only why they quit, but also, and more significantly why they do not quit (*Rohlen 1974: 82*).

By looking again at what Abegglen wrote, it is possible to see that he did not regard length of tenure as *the* defining characteristic of working relationships within companies who do emphasize 'permanent commitment'. In fact he took care to remind us that the relationship between an employee and their company cannot be judged to depend on the length of the employment period, and that the relationship between an employee and their company is, in fact, likely to be fundamentally the same for the duration of the employment period, regardless of the length of the employment period, the size of the company, the nature of the profession, or the gender of the employees.

Another 'myth' which forms part of anthropological representations of Japanese working practices, is a dualism whereby companies which operate a 'lifetime employment system' are regarded as generically different from companies which don't. That is to say, companies which operate a 'lifetime employment system' are regarded as having identifiably different work ethics and practices from those which don't operate a 'lifetime employment system'. This dualism can be traced back at least as far as Nakane (1970). Nakane (1970) provides us with an early example, if not the first example, of a description of 'the lifetime employment system', and one which has remained uppermost in the anthropological imagination. However, she does not integrate this description into her thesis on organisational structure in Japan, which she presents in her book, *Japanese Society* (1970). Nakane's reasons for writing the book are summarized in the following quote:

> This analysis calls for a reconsideration of the stereotyped view that modernization and urbanization weakens kinship ties, and creates a new type of social organization

> on entirely different bases. Certainly industrialization produces a new type of organization, the formal structure of which may be closely akin to that found in modern Western societies. However, this does not necessarily accord with changes in the informal structure, in which, as in the case of Japan, the traditional structure persists in large measure (*Nakane 1970: 8*).

Her thesis argues this assertion convincingly. However, her description of 'the lifetime employment system', which is from page fifteen to nineteen, reinforces the 'stereotyped view' of a break with the past, which she challenges. She begins her thesis by outlining her basic formulation of *ba*, 'frame', and 'attribute', saying how individuals in Japan reference themselves primarily by 'frame (*ba*)', rather than by attribute or by reference to an individual 'self', arguing that such a consciousness and orientation "fosters the strength of an institution and the institutional unit (such as school or company)...[and] is in fact the basis of Japanese social organisation" (Nakane 1970: 3). Here we see how the emphasis on affiliation (*shozoku*) overrides individualism and reinforces *seken* morality. Nakane continues by saying that the primary 'frame (*ba*)' in many Japanese's lives is *kaisha*, 'company', which is borne out by the fact that Japan is regarded as a 'company centred society' by many of its citizens and scholars (Okumura 1985) (2.4). Nakane's assertion is that this relationship an individual has with a particular frame[1] promotes a long-term relationship where the emotional content is encouraged. By arguing that a Japanese has a heightened emotional relationship with a given frame, in which the self is implicated in that frame, we can begin to see the coercive and consensual dynamic that would exist in such a relationship, and which is born out in practice. The self not only relies on the frame, but the frame is also dependent on the self, giving rise to a high level of commitment and dependence on either side. This is a very abstract extrapolation from Nakane's structuralist explanation, in which selves are presented as identical and remain silent, but the basic idea remains a powerful framework for understanding Japanese collective selves (Hamada 1992) as they are constructed along the lines of 'the group model of Japanese society' (Befu 1980). Slowly Nakane builds an argument that the *ie*, "a corporate residential group" (Nakane 1970: 4) has been replaced by *kaisha* and by other frames, which all retain structural, cultural, and linguistic references to *ie*. Rohlen (1974) and Kondo (1990) also argue this. Nakane provides no historical or ethnographic data to support this or much of her thesis, as she forewarns in her introduction, but she argues convincingly that institutions in Japan have both a tendency to organize themselves, through ethics and practice, to strengthen their fraternity and develop their own internal ethics and logics, legitimated by the situational morality of *seken*.[2]

Nakane then begins to lay the foundation of her argument that *ba*, 'frames', in Japan have an inclusiveness and exclusivity which mitigates against membership based on attribute being able to exist between frames. In the section "Emotional participation and one-to-one relationships" (Nakane 1970: 8), she argues that the integration of people of different attribute is achieved in two heuristically separable ways:

---

[1]Nakane more than once invokes the Japanese saying, 'a man cannot have two masters', conceding that a person may have more than one frame, but one of them will be significantly more important than the others. This accords with Abe's (1995) description of *seken* (1.3).

[2]This internal ethics and logics are *seken*

> One is to influence the members within the frame in such a way that they have a feeling of 'one-ness'; the second method is to create an internal organisation which will tie the individuals in the group to each other and then to strengthen this organisation. In practice, both these modes occur together, are bound together and progress together; they become, in fact, one common rule of action, but for convenience sake I shall discuss them separately (*Nakane 1970: 9*).

Nakane argues that this unity is achieved by "fostering a feeling of rivalry against other similar groups....facilitated by continual human contact" (Nakane 1970: 10). She then gives a brief description of how this is achieved in a company setting. Nakane then uses the term 'the lifetime employment system' for the first time. It relates directly to her previous explanation of how company unity is achieved structurally (Nakane 1970: 10), where she argues on the basis of her developing thesis, that a closed social group is organised hierarchically in one-to-one vertical relationships on the basis of 'frame (*ba*)', being imposed on attribute. She describes 'the lifetime employment system' as a business enterprise organised as a 'closed social group' (Nakane 1970: 14). This description of 'the lifetime employment system', does not mention 'lifetime employment' as a characteristic. This is a very important point, for the emphasis on length of tenure is the feature which has come to dominate and obscure our understanding of the practices and codes of conduct which constitute 'the lifetime employment system', and its importance in defining and legitimating relationships throughout society as a whole (Nakane 1970, Rohlen 1974, Befu 1980, Miyanaga 1991, Hendry 1993).

Following her initial reference to 'the lifetime employment system', quoted above, Nakane refutes critics of Abegglen (1958) who have argued "that this system develops from Japan's economic situation and is closely related to the surplus of labour" (Nakane 1970: 15):

> The life-time employment system [is] characterized by the integral and lasting commitment between employee and employer...It has been suggested that this system develops from Japan's economic situation and is closely related to the surplus of labour. However, as J.C. Abegglen has suggested in his penetrating analysis...the immobility of labour is not merely an economic problem. That it is also closely related to the nature of Japanese social structure will become evident from my discussion. In fact Japanese labour relations in terms of surplus and shortage of labour have least affected the lifetime employment system (*Nakane 1970: 15*).

Nakane stresses the role of commitment and the construction of immobility through membership to closed social groups in characterizing this 'system', indicating that both are *consequences* of the relationship between frame (*ba*) and the individual self. Her emphasis is not on length of tenure, but is on 'the integral and lasting commitment' which *may* lead to an employee remaining with the same company.

Until this point Nakane has described 'the lifetime employment system' within the terms of her thesis, as something which is characteristic of, and characterises, human relationships throughout Japanese society. But at this point she suspends her thesis to "give a brief description of the history of the development of the lifetime employment system in Japan" (Nakane 1970:15). Her 'description', between pages fifteen and nineteen, breaks the flow of her analysis, and contradicts what she has been arguing up to this point and what she continues to argue subsequently: that modernization and urbanization do not weaken kinship ties or create new types of social

organization on entirely different bases (Nakane 1970: 8). Nakane's discussion of 'the lifetime employment system' also stands out because of its jarring methodological separation from the rest of her thesis. Nakane's thesis is a structuralist account, in all its ahistorical, generalizing brilliance, but her account of 'the lifetime employment system' is pure functionalist description.

In her 'brief description', labour shortages in the early Meiji period were the stimulus to the inception of those practices and ideals which constitute 'the lifetime employment system'. Even though this was a factor, Nakane implies it was the sole factor, contradicting her defence of Abegglen (1958), quoted above. What is closer to the truth, is that during the middle years of the Meiji period (1868-1912), when industrial working practices were developing, labour market dynamics acted as a stimulus to the introduction of practices which were not new, but were practices which had been replaced by those introduced from abroad along with imported technology. What happened was a case of local practices being reintroduced, mediating practices imported from abroad. This was the case with the development of an ethics of age seniority, and the practice of precise rigid ranking, although Nakane infers that both developed as a result of the new industrial conglomerates offering job security. She fails to mention the nature of the commitment and the mechanisms which promote, maintain and reproduce that commitment, leaving us to assume that modernization and urbanization did lead to fundamental change. There is only simplistic causal explanation of the most functionalist kind, which is not referenced to or integrated into the rest of her thesis at all. She also argues that the link between serving the company and serving the nation, and the nurturing of the idea that the company is a family, were the result of directives from the military government. This *was* the case, but she does not once mention the influence of the *ie* in these directives, and further reinforces the idea she is attempting to refute, that new types of social organisation were created. Again, having stated that *ie* ideology was responsible for the development of company housing schemes, recreation centres at resorts, and welfare schemes (Nakane 1970: 10), she later states, in her 'description', that labour unions were responsible. Nakane fails to embed her 'description' in an historical context. The fact is that *ie* ideology and union pressure were both significant, but at different points in time. Union pressure was influential after WWII, but even then, unions were company unions, not trades unions. In other words, they were constructed on the basis of frames (*ba*) following *ie* structure, not attribute. Nakane does not mention that the structure of trade unions in Japan also follows *ie* structure, a point which would have embedded her description of the 'lifetime employment system' in her thesis. She then ends her description at the very moment when the organisational structures, practices, and codes of conduct which constitute 'the lifetime employment system', were just becoming powerful ideals among the Japanese people: in the 1950s and 1960s.

Nakane's description of 'the lifetime employment system' suggests the development of a discrete set of practices which are exclusive to that 'system'. Such an idea has, I believe, contributed to the current anthropological view that the practices and ideals which constitute an identifiable 'system' are discrete, different, and can be separated off from other types of company organisation and from society as a whole. This is surprising given Bellah's (1985) work, and the work of others. The generalising and systematizing tendency in Nakane's structuralist account might reasonably be

thought to have contributed to the idea of a discrete and homogenous 'system' characterised by 'lifetime employment', but this is not the case. Although Nakane systematizes a whole series of ethics, codes of conduct and working practices in arguing her thesis, she never singles out 'lifetime employment' as an organising and systematizing principle or practice. Nakane's thesis is that modern Japanese company structure, working practices and codes of conduct are part of an identifiable matrix of practices and ideals, firmly rooted in society as a whole, and characteristic of other companies, organisations and institutions. Her initial mention of 'the lifetime employment system' does ground it firmly in the practices and ideals she argues exist across the nation as a whole (Nakane 1970: 14), and she argues forcefully, through her thesis, that 'the lifetime employment system', *as represented by a matrix of practices and codes of conduct* rather than in name, has continuity both temporally through history and spatially across Japanese society as a whole. When we think of the 'lifetime employment system' in this way, it becomes much clearer just what 'the collapse of 'lifetime employment system' refers to: a redefining and refiguring of workplace ethics and practices, which will have repercussions across the whole of society. Even so, although Nakane convincingly grounds the practices and codes of conduct which constitute 'the lifetime employment system' and all other 'corporate' working practices within society as a whole, because she did not ground her description of 'the lifetime employment system' in those practices and codes of conduct, she is responsible for propagating, if not initiating, the idea in the anthropological imagination that the practices which constitute 'the lifetime employment system' are fundamentally different from other working practices in other contexts.

Rohlen (1974), like Nakane, also argues for the importance of large company structure in defining ethics and practice in society as a whole:

> Like any modern society, Japan today contains a wide variety of institutions...among them the company is undoubtedly the most significant if sheer numbers of participants and centrality to national livelihood is considered. In the past, the country's villages were pre-eminent by these standards, but the last hundred years has witnessed a tremendous increase of commercial and industrial organisations, and they now surpass villages as Japan's major type of social organisation (*Rohlen 1974: 18*).

Rohlen (1974) does not discuss 'the lifetime employment system', and deliberately does not use the term 'lifetime employment system'.[3] This is both good and bad. Good because the term 'the lifetime employment system' is misleading, but bad because he doesn't critically engage with the term at all, allowing it to remain unchallenged. This is disappointing, especially as his decision to avoid the term was probably influenced by his belief that it was unhelpful. Writing at the beginning of the Interpretive Turn, and following Geertz, Rohlen was undoubtedly wary of 'systems' and 'structures'. He begins his third chapter, titled, 'Entrance, Departure, and "Lifelong Commitment"', with the opening two paragraphs of Abegglen's chapter on 'lifetime commitment' (Abegglen 1958: 11). By quoting this passage, however, Rohlen follows critics of Abegglen by focusing our attention on

[3]The term 'lifetime employment system' has been dropped from most modern anthropological references to it, with 'lifetime employment' as a practice becoming the focus of attention, as the word 'system' generally came to be regarded as problematic within anthropology. While this might initially seem a positive move forward, this is not the case, for this linguistic move has simply focused attention on length of tenure to the point of ignoring all else. At least with the term 'the lifetime employment system' there was the clear indication, contained in the word 'system', that there was something more.

length of tenure, and reinforces the idea that this is all Abegglen discussed. Rohlen is not a critic of Abegglen particularly, instead he draws our attention to the limited interests of Abegglen's critics. He very briefly outlines the response to Abegglen's thesis, citing the works of Taira (1962), Tsuda (1965), Karsh & Cole (1968), and Cole (1972), before stating:

> The main problem, to sort out the source of variation in both [the U.S. and Japan] so that their comparison may be more precise and revealing, is still to be satisfactorily accomplished (*Rohlen 1974: 63*).

Rohlen then continues by drawing our attention to two points: that the emphasis in the debate so far has been on comparisons between Japanese and U.S. practices, exclusively with respect to length of tenure. The second is that the source of evidence is almost exclusively statistical:

> The pendulum, once swinging strongly toward an emphasis on the unique qualities of Japanese employment, began to swing back in the other direction, and similarities between Japanese and American statistics were emphasized (*Rohlen 1974: 63*).

In his introduction, Rohlen states that none of the studies which have dealt with Japanese company organisation up until this point in time, have offered detailed documentation of organisational structures, daily events, official explanations, or anything which could be called ethnographic data. Instead relying on statistics and vagaries which lead to 'gross oversimplifications' (Rohlen 1974: 2).

Although Rohlen states in his conclusion that "This study is obviously not the sort designed to answer a particular set of theoretical questions" (Rohlen 1974: 259), he does address the major theoretical approaches to company organisation in Japan which were presented in the studies of the time, in a systematic and generally thorough way. Chapter three on entrance and departure discusses 'lifetime' employment, by looking at 'commitment'. Chapter five thoroughly and productively engages with Nakane's one-to-one vertical relationships, and includes an important consideration of the interplay between the 'formal' and 'informal' structure of the company, following Nakane (1970). Rohlen also looks in detail at remuneration, rewards and financial incentives in chapter seven, an important part of Abegglen's thesis.

Overall Rohlen explains how the organisation of the bank, both formally and informally creates an environment where people do tend to stay for the whole period expected of them. Rohlen concentrates on the ways in which members of the bank enter and leave the company, documenting the 'regular and normal' and the 'irregular and abnormal' ways of coming and going (Rohlen 1974: 73), so that what emerges is a picture of criteria and value judgments associated with recruitment and departure. This includes the female staff who are also judged to have their 'regular' and 'irregular' ways of leaving the bank, ideally during their mid-twenties in order to get married. This is an important point because it tells us, just as Abegglen did, that length of tenure "does not alter the nature of the commitment between worker and employer over the employment period" (Abegglen 1958: 13). In the same way, the nature of commitment is the same for employees leaving the company under either 'normal' or 'abnormal' conditions, during the employment period. This means that length of tenure cannot be a criterion on which to define employment codes of conduct or practice, as has clearly been the case with 'lifetime employment'. So, much like Nakane (1970), Rohlen tells us about the matrix of people, practices, ideology, and ethics, which constitute what is

referred to as 'the lifetime employment system', together with how it defines and exists in a dynamic relationship with ethics and practice throughout society as a whole. But also like Nakane, Rohlen has allowed the idea of 'the lifetime employment system' as an employment 'system', separate from and generically different from other employment practices, to continue.

Clark's (1979) approach to 'lifetime employment' follows both Nakane (1970) and Rohlen (1974). He notes the 'irrationality' of the employment practices which sustain the ideal of 'lifetime employment', under the terms of a rational economic model:

> The employers' behaviour on the labour market seems paradoxical. There are many older workers and their number is increasing; and few younger workers and their number is diminishing. Yet larger employers are paying older workers twice as much as younger ones. If the aim of the 'rational employer' were simply to obtain the cheapest possible labour, we should expect him to pay older men less and younger men more - in other words, to give up 'pay-by-age'. We should also expect him to make considerable efforts to recruit among older workers, who are in such good supply, even though older workers would naturally be mid-career entrants from other firms. This latter change of policy would, of course, be inconsistent with the practices sustaining 'lifetime employment' (*Clark 1979: 154*).

Unfortunately Clark does not identify the practices which sustain lifetime employment. Instead, he only tells us: "traditions...values, and...all sorts of moral and political considerations" need to be taken into account (Clark 1979: 155). This vagueness was also one of Rohlen's (1974: 2) criticisms of the work done in the wake of Abegglen (1958). Clark begins his assessment of 'lifetime employment' on a familiar note, summarizing the conclusions of those who have looked at 'lifetime employment' before him:

> It is apparent that the term 'life-time employment' describes the employment conditions of only a part of the Japanese labour force, and is even then a very imperfect description. As Abegglen himself knew, 'life-time employment' is not offered by smaller companies, which still employ more than half of all workers. Nor does it apply to temporary workers or to women. It is enjoyed only by male full employees of large companies (*Clark 1979: 174*).

Clark tells us that "the term 'lifetime employment' describes the employment conditions of only a part of the Japanese workforce". This gives the impression that the 'employment conditions' of companies which are perceived to offer 'lifetime employment' are generically different from those that don't. This dualism is very evident in the quote above, and is one which has become deeply entrenched in the anthropological imagination. The belief that the ethics and working practices of companies who are arbitrarily classified as operating 'the lifetime employment system', are discrete, homogeneous, and identifiably different from the ethics and working practices in companies which are not perceived as operating a 'lifetime employment system', has become deeply ingrained and unquestioningly accepted in the literature on Japan (Kondo 1990). There isn't anything unquestionably discrete nor unproblematically separable from what is posited as falling outside this arbitrary category. I have never seen an analysis attempt to establish the criteria for just what 'the lifetime employment system' is, or a comparative analysis of a company which operates a 'lifetime employment system' under these criteria, and one which falls outside. Neither have I seen a method or set of criteria for classifying a company as 'an elite firm', or 'a large company' on the basis of its

internal organisation, its working practices, or its ethics.

In my experience, small companies and large companies are organisationally and ideologically very similar. My experience working for a small family-owned steel-finishing company of eleven employees, and for Kodansha, the largest publishers in Japan, is that they are organisationally very similar. Company practices and ideals are very similar, the attitudes and values of the employees are fundamentally the same, and the organization of time and space is also very similar. Offering 'lifetime employment', which Kodansha is recognised as doing, does not indicate fundamental organisational differences.

Clark's discussion of 'lifetime employment' as an ideal is the most compelling part of his discussion of the subject. 'Lifetime employment' as an ideal does act as a coercive ethic to bind together, reproduce, and maintain working practices and codes of conduct. Clark rightly notes that criticism of the 'lifetime employment system' which seeks to play down its importance, on the basis that it involves a restricted section of the population, fails to miss its relevance as an ideal:

> [These criticisms] do not invalidate the proposition that 'life-time employment' is at the same time an ideal, and a very powerful one...At [the company], workers of all ages interpreted events as if 'life-time employment' was normal and right, and exceptions to it due to pressure of circumstance or moral deficiencies...The rightness of 'life-time employment' was not an issue, only the reason why it didn't exist in practice (*Clark 1979: 175*).

It is particularly when talking about 'lifetime employment' as an ideal, that we begin to appreciate its influence on, and relationship to, society as a whole. Clark demonstrates the power of the ideal of 'lifetime employment' on recruitment policy, first towards school -leavers, and then towards 'mid-career entrants (*chuuto saiyō*)':

> One impressive proof of [the power of the ideal] was Marumaru's decision to change its recruitment practices and take in school and college graduates, a decision that may have been prompted partly by the fact that young people received low wages, but very much more by considerations of what was right for a firm in Marumaru's position in 'the society of industry', and of how a company community ought to be composed...Instead of behaving as our imaginary 'rational' employer might, and encouraging 'mid-career entrants', Marumaru spent tens of millions of yen trying to recruit high school leavers who were known to be unlikely to stay, and completely ignored its 'mid-career entrants' (*Clark 1979: 175*).

> Just as [the company] took so little trouble over obtaining mid-career recruits, so it treated them with careless indifference when they joined...On the whole mid-career entrants were resigned to their treatment, and seemed prepared to accept that those who had served [the company] since leaving school deserved greater rewards than they themselves did. Yet the inferior treatment of mid-career entrants was inconsistent with the meritocratic ideal, which the company...used...to justify the rapid rise of those mid-career entrants who had been invited to join [the company]...Most mid-career entrants never caught up, and...found the iterations of meritocracy irksome (*Clark 1979: 165*).

Clark's discussion of 'mid-career entrants (*chuuto saiyō*) is consistent with the attitudes found in Rohlen (1974) and Nakane (1970). Yet, unfortunately, Clark's analysis never progresses beyond the purely descriptive and the conjectural, never building systematically on the work of those before him, and never explaining how the practice of 'lifetime employment' not only maintains and

reproduces itself, but also entrenches itself. His only explanation, although true, is that operating a policy of 'lifetime employment' is a sign to 'the society of industry' and society as a whole, that a given company has now joined an arbitrary, although prestigious, cultural category. All his evidence suggests that powerful social sanctions are in operation, but he doesn't tell us what they are:

> Most [mid-career entrants] were surprisingly ready to accept that they had set their own careers back by changing companies; and that it was reasonable that, for example, school entrants of their age should be preferred over them. None of them...appealed to the countervailing argument that, for example, mid-career entrants were actually better for the company than school entrants because they had more experience (*Clark 1979:176*).

This attitude among people corroborates Nakane's thesis that webs of obligation and hierarchy can only successfully be entered from the bottom, and that social capital gained by moving up such a hierarchy cannot easily be transferred to another 'frame (*ba*)', in this case, another company. However, apart from making the important point that 'life-time employment' is an ideal, and one that has a high degree of efficacy, Clark never explains why it is an ideal beyond a series of tautologous suggestions that tell us very little: "Sanctioned by what is seen as tradition, morally correct, and emblematic of Japanese culture, 'life-time employment' is the goal towards which both firms and individuals have to direct their efforts" (Clark 1979: 175).

In the David Plath edited volume *Work and Lifecourse in Japan* (1983), we arrive at the point were the anthropologist defers completely to the 'calculations' (Plath 1983: 15) of the statistician. Levine (1983), the statistician, attempts to arrive at some sort of definitive conclusion regarding 'lifetime employment', but his analysis offers no conclusions and ends in evident frustration. By this stage, 1983, the impression a reader might get is very much one of the analyst trying to kill the beast rather than understand it: If only it can be shown that 'lifetime employment', whatever that means now, is insignificant, we can get on and study something 'important' (Levine 1983: 31). It is emblematic, maybe, that the chapters which deal most directly with 'lifetime employment' in *Work and Lifecourse in Japan* come at the beginning of the book, being both a recognition that it cannot be ignored, and in order to get it out of the way as soon as possible. The same sentiments, of something which has the potential to divert an analysis, can be sensed in Nakane (1970), Kondo (1990) and Hamada (1992).

Length of tenure is now the only aspect of 'large'[4] company practice which Levine, or anybody else it seems, is interested in from this point in time onwards. As if a hunter, the anthropologist has identified the beast's weakness and now all efforts are directed towards it. Plath, in his introduction, is still following the pattern of stressing the similarities between Japanese, European and American employment practices, drawing solely on statistical data on 'overall rates of job-changing' (Plath 1983: 16). Levine's argument is full of caveats regarding the data he presents or the conclusions he draws. He notes that the methods of data collection and presentation have changed over time: "Thus, there is a problem of data consistency as well as reliability over the

[4]Again 'large' is tautologously defined by operating a 'lifetime employment system', again with no stated criteria.

decades since the beginning of industrialization" (Levine 1983: 20). And: "Unfortunately it is difficult to estimate precisely how much movement is represented by those already in the labour force or in employment. The evidence is fragmentary" (Levine 1983: 24). Levine's assessment of the degree of job changing in Japan also includes those who are transferred from 'parent' companies to subsidiaries or 'closely related firms such as subcontractors' (Levine 1983: 25). Including these transfers is highly questionable, as this practice was introduced by employers in order to uphold obligations pertaining to 'lifetime employment' (Hamada 1980; Yahata 1997). In addition, Levine, and Holden (1983) in the subsequent chapter, also include data on the highly mobile 55-59 age group, which was actually outside what is normally regarded as the upper age limit of 'lifetime employment' when Levine and Holden were writing. In the late 1970s, the Ministry of Labour was urging firms to extend the upper limit. However, during this period of transition, over 50% of firms were still retiring their 'lifetime employment' staff at 55 (Hamada 1980). In view of this, Levine and Holden should, at the very least, have qualified these statistics.

Levine also refers to Taira's (1962) study, which has been influential in forming the anthropological construction of the 'lifetime employment system'. As Levine notes, Taira's study is based on statistical data collected mainly in the pre-WWII period. This is significant because most modern Japanese accounts regard the 'lifetime employment system' as a post-WWII development. Levine laments:

> Unfortunately, no parallel analysis exists for a post-World War II period. However, if we assume that the turnover rate fell by half after the war, the movement from employer to employer would have remained substantial, say in the neighbourhood of five percent a year. At that rate a worker would typically change companies at least two or three times in the course of a career. A sizeable proportion would have made more changes than that, especially it would seem those employed by small and medium-sized firms (*Levine 1983: 28*).

Levine's conclusions are presumptuous and purely speculative, and highly questionable as they include company transfers and the 55-59 age group. Also, bearing in mind Clark's (1979) observation that many people under the age of 25 change jobs, but still take up what are regarded as 'lifetime employment' positions, what do Levine's conclusions tell us of any interest? Even if we accept that 'lifetime employment' is not a lived reality for over sixty percent of the Japanese workforce, we learn nothing about that lived reality, and we fail to even consider the effects of that lived reality on the lives of others. Levine ends his paper saying:

> [C]areer patterns and mobility pathways appear to differ radically from what is implied in the notion of lifetime employment....It is astonishing how little we know about the labour market behaviours of these, the vast majority of Japanese workers. Four fifths of our research energy seems to have been put into investigating the careers of one-fifth of the labour force. A change in direction seems more than overdue (*Levine 1983: 31*).

What we have learned from Nakane (1970), Rohlen (1974), and Clark (1979), is that length of tenure does not have a significant bearing on company organisation and codes of conduct. Studies such as those by Taira (1962), Marsh and Mannari (1971, 1972), Holden (1983), and Levine (1983) also allow for the same conclusions, as they do not address anything other than length of tenure, which itself, by their own admission, provides no indication of fundamental difference. The fact that length of

tenure among firms which are supposed to operate a 'lifetime employment system' does not seem to differ very much from firms that don't, according to these studies, clearly indicates that there is a high degree of organisational and ethical consistency, rather than difference across Japanese companies.

Two recent analyses of working practices (Kondo 1990, Hamada 1992) reproduce the dualism that we have seen developing over the years in the various anthropological representations of working practices in Japan. Kondo (1990) separates off large firms as employing more than 300 persons, another arbitrary figure used by the Japanese Government.[5] Kondo then builds a fundamental organisational and ethical distinction on this 'culturally salient category' (Kondo 1990: 50). What falls outside this category of 'small to medium size enterprises (*chuushō kigyō*)', is: "large industry...elite government bureaucracies, and...the lives of Organization Men in elite firms" (Kondo 1990: 50). Kondo dismisses the "familiar themes of lifetime employment, harmony, homogeneity, diligence, and a 'Confucian ethic'". She also regards 'the lives of Organization Men in elite firms' as an 'infinitesimal, though powerful sector' (Kondo 1990: 50) and as a 'problematic conceptual slippage' (Kondo 1990: 50). Yet she leaves these 'familiar themes' in place, unchallenged and unquestioned, and consequently reproduces them. Then, as a result of not paying enough regard to the codes and practices of large companies, and of not discussing their influence across the whole of the 'society of industry', Kondo reproduces the dualism that all 'small to medium size enterprises (*chuushō kigyō*)' are discernibly different from 'large' companies.

*******

I have been saying that a whole matrix of ethics and practices which constitute what is known as 'the lifetime employment system' have been ignored and trivialized as a result of the emphasis on length of tenure. So, what is this matrix of ethics and practice which defines the 'lifetime employment system', and which are the subject of the debates concerning the 'unravelling' or 'collapse' of the 'lifetime employment system'? Bellah (1985) provides us with a detailed history of the ethics and practices of 'the lifetime employment system', demonstrating that 'the lifetime employment system' is a generic model for the matrix of ethics and practices which constitute the vast majority of Japanese workplaces (**5.1, 5.4**). The characteristics of Befu's (1980) 'group model of Japanese society', as well as Hendry's (1993) 'particular characteristics of Japanese society' are all descriptions of the matrix of ethics and practices which constitute 'the lifetime employment system'. A basic mistake that has been made with anthropological representations of 'the lifetime employment system' has been to confuse the *practice* of lifetime employment with 'the lifetime employment system' itself. Almost exclusively, all analyses have attempted to show is that the *practice* of lifetime employment is both limited and gendered. This is not in dispute. What I do dispute is that an 'industrial dualism' exists in Japan, and that those members of a company who are

[5]There are various governmental/industrial classifications of what constitutes large or small/ medium size companies, which are used by different persons or institutions in different contexts. The figure Clark uses to mark of 'large' firms is 1,000 employees, while Kondo's figure is 300. Neither Clark (1979) or Kondo (1990) seem to be aware that a number of arbitrarily chosen figures are used.

not offered 'lifetime employment' are subject to an identifiably different set of ethics and practices from those within the company that do. There is also the inference in the industrial dualism model, that those within a company which offers lifetime employment who are not offered 'lifetime employment', fall within the other category, even though they work for a company that offers 'lifetime employment', indicating the confusion over this subject. In addition, I argue that the ethics and practices which constitute 'the lifetime employment system' are the ethics and practices of the vast majority of Japanese workplaces, large or small, and consequently the ethics and practices of the society as a whole.

In many ways, this a simply a question of semantics. Rohlen (1974) seems to have thought this, for he refused to use the term 'the lifetime employment system', even though he was writing about it. But this has only served to heighten the confusion. The criteria used to apprehend 'the lifetime employment system' are arbitrary and at best tenuous, and most importantly of all, none of them describe a matrix of ethics and practices which can be regarded as different from workplaces which do not fall under these criteria. *Oyabun/kobun* (fictive parent/child) relationships are not dependent on the practice of recruiting only from high school or university once a year, and the ethics and practices pertaining to women in companies which are perceived to operate a 'lifetime employment' policy is also not dependent on that policy either. The role, position, and life-course of women in the workplace in Japan cannot be seen to show changes that are consistent with the perceived presence or absence of a 'lifetime employment policy'. As I aim to demonstrate in the next section, utilitarian motives, together with cultural ideals which have continuity through all workplaces and among all types of employees, male and female, tend to have a greater effect on the incidence of 'long term commitment'.

Then there is the question of authenticity and validity. 'Traditions' associated with this 'system' can be described as 'reinvented' (Hobsbawn and Ranger 1986). The idea of the salaryman as a modern-day *samurai* being just one example. But the tendency to trivialize and ridicule that which is regarded as 'inauthentic' or 'reinvented' should be resisted. Hobsbawn and Ranger's *Invented Traditions* was not an attempt to trivialize and undermine the traditions they focused on, but was an attempt to deepen our understanding, both of those traditions and of the process of culture and intellectual thought, generally. To allow our own Western assumptions concerning authenticity to colour our assessment of any codes and practices is dangerous and unproductive. Japanese history, like the history of any other nation, is full of examples of 'invented traditions': the Tokugawa period alone was a hive of activity, with numerous intellectual traditions being reinvented in the name of political expediency (Tsunoda et al. 1958; Bellah 1985; Nosco 1989).

The fact that what passes as 'the lifetime employment system' is consistent with values and attitudes that underpin the whole of Japanese society, can be demonstrated by considering the ethics of this 'employment system', which can be traced back through Japanese history (Tsunoda 1958; Bellah 1985). Bellah, in his *Tokugawa Religion* (1985), attempts to trace the 'cultural roots of modern Japan' by looking at the relationship between religion, philosophy, and society, and between religion, philosophy, and the economy, during the Tokugawa period (1600-1868), before arguing that the same attitudes and values underpin modern Japan. Many of the ethics and practices which

constitute 'the lifetime employment system' can be traced back to Tokugawa period and beyond. The practices of seniority by age, and of a strict hierarchy within the household and within society as a whole derive from both Confucian and Neo-Confucian ethics, particularly the Confucian notion of 'filial piety', first laid out in the *Classic of Filial Piety*. The Japanese emphasis on harmony, very evident in Rohlen's (1979) analysis, and both consented to and questioned by Kondo's (1990) sweet factory women, is still a vital element in maintaining position and authority, and is itself derived from the Confucian view of the world as harmonious and static. Confucian cosmology argues that 'dire calamities' will befall Mankind if the correct correspondences between Heaven and Earth are not maintained. A similar discourse could be heard in most Japanese workplaces of all sizes and compositions before the Bubble, and probably still can in most. The threat of 'dire calamities' has continued to bolster authority and the status quo in Japan, and has resulted in the notion of 'harmony (*wa*)' becoming an important motivational goal. The legitimacy of this notion of hierarchy was then reinforced through certain Buddhist interpretations of the universe, particularly those which emphasised hierarchy, such as the doctrine of the Kegon sect (Tsunoda 1958; Bellah 1985).

From the eighth century, the *Classic of Filial Piety* was required reading in schools and most households possessed a copy. Consequently, the ethics of filial piety came to have increasing influence on the ethics of Japan, and on the structure of society. During the Kamakura period (1185-1333), Bellah tells us that: "the *samurai*, high and low, even though they might have no other book, were likely to have a copy of the [*Classic of Filial Piety*]" (Bellah 1985: 89). By the Tokugawa period, Neo-Confucianism was the dominant philosophical strand adopted by the Tokugawa Shōgunate. Bellah tells us that the ethics of filial piety became increasingly institutionalised, so that the Tokugawa notion of loyalty was essentially the Confucian notion of filial piety applied to the polity. The Tokugawa concept of loyalty derived its legitimacy from the elevated position of the *samurai* in Tokugawa society, who had integrated the notion of filial piety into their own codes of honour and loyalty prior to the Tokugawa period, when the country was a series of warring fiefdoms. The structure of loyalty between lord and *samurai* during this period (1156-1600) was closely based on the ethics of filial piety, and was subsequently conceptualised by Yamaga Sokō in the 17th Century A.D. as 'the way of the warrior (*bushidō*)'. During the Tokugawa period, the 'proud self-determination' and 'honourific individualism' (Ikegami 1995) which also characterised the *samurai* 'way' was suppressed in the name of 'civic duty' (4.2, 8), but the ethics of filial piety and the tradition of loyalty which had characterised *samurai* conduct came to embody the Tokugawa notion of 'civic duty'. As the Tokugawa period progressed, these codes of conduct were disseminated throughout the whole of society. Ordinary citizens were not at all unfamiliar with the ethics of filial piety in the household, but during the Tokugawa period these ethics were applied to the whole of society. Bellah tells us that the whole of society became '*bushidō*-ised':

> All the evidence about popular sects and ethical movements [during the Tokugawa period] indicates that they taught a virtually identical ethics. They all stressed loyalty and filial piety, obedience and righteousness, economy and diligence. All demanded selfless devotion to superiors, a minimum of personal consumption, and a vigorous prosecution of daily tasks and duties. They were at one with *Bushidō* in being 'ethically activist' and 'inner worldly ascetic' (*Bellah 1985: 98*).

We come across almost identical exhortations at the 'ethics (*rinri*) retreat' Kondo (1990) visited, where virtually the same 'ethical movement' can be seen to be flourishing three hundred years later. Kondo's 'ethics retreat' is just one example of a booming industry in Japan, before the 1990s. Companies of all sizes sent both their male and female, full-time and part-time staff for weekends at these retreats, where they are put through a series of demanding challenges which draw on and emphasize both Confucian and Buddhist ethics. Asceticism and the ability to accept hardship 'honourably' are a typical example, and one which requires a very Confucian 'loyalty' to one's company colleagues, to the staff at the retreat, and also to one's parents, and a very Buddhist sense of the self as requiring continual focus and negation. It is also from the ethic of filial piety that the ideology of 'company as family' derives. The idea of the company as a family which looks after its staff in a fatherly manner, through *senpai/kōhai* (senior/junior) *oyabun/kobun* (parent/child) relationships, is pure Confucian tradition, and a primary mechanism driving not only 'the lifetime employment system', but all employment practices for both men and women. Whether we can say it has been 'reinvented' or whether it has continued through the ages is a moot point, but one which does not alter the significance of these traditions, or their efficacy in the modern age.

Bellah (1985) tells us that diligence and frugality can be seen to derive from both Confucian concerns with the economy, and from *Bushidō*. The Confucian concern with diligence and frugality derives from the need to maintain harmony. Under the terms of *Bushidō*, diligence and frugality are the means to selfless devotion to one's Lord. In this way, the pursuit of diligence and frugality is motivated by both the desire for balance and harmony, as well as a goal-attainment-driven desire for selfless devotion to one's superiors: two of the primary motivational goals of 'the lifetime employment system'. Bellah argues that the mechanism which drove this goal-attainment attitude, was: "the obligation to make return for limitless *on*, which made the concept of 'occupation' almost sacred, due to the almost religious nature of this 'selfless devotion':

> The occupation of *samurai* offers a prototype for this fusion [of the concept of occupation and the obligation to make return for limitless *on*. The tasks and duties of his office are seen as fulfilling his obligation to his lord. They must be fulfilled with utmost devotion and without consideration of self...Occupation as a means of fulfilling one's obligations to one's superiors came more and more into prominence (*Bellah 1985: 115*).

Hierarchy, harmony, selfless loyalty to one's seniors, frugality, obedience, diligence: these are the matrix of ethics and practices which constitute 'the lifetime employment system', and which underpin, not just those companies which are perceived as operating a 'lifetime employment' policy, but all workplaces and, consequently, the whole of society. Rohlen (1974) tells us that :

> "this older social morality is well suited to the organization of modern, large-scale institutions...While public debate, both economic and political has been carried on...in the language of a democratic society, the internal life of many institutions has continued to be influenced by [this] different and more traditional philosophy" (Rohlen 1974: 59)

This 'social morality' does not just apply to the kind of large institutions Rohlen was studying, either. The popular movements of the Tokugawa period (Bellah 1985), the post-WWII period

(Kondo), and the pervasiveness of the ideology of 'company as family', attest to this.

'Lifetime employment', or more accurately, the commitment to one company, can be seen as both a *consequence* of an ethics of 'selfless devotion to one's superiors', and as an goal in itself, but it should not be the defining characteristic of what is only a generic model for the Japanese workplace, which should be refined not rubbished. As the man who started it all made clear: "where the proportion of female workers is high [and where] the rate of employee exit is high, this does not affect the nature of commitment through the employment period" (Abegglen 1958: 13).

*******

## 2.2) The 'Society of Industry' and the Mechanism of Increasing Immobility

Although Clark (1979) reproduces the idea of an industrial dualism based on the perceived presence or absence of the ideal of 'lifetime employment' within a company (2.1), he also introduces the idea of 'the society of industry', which suggests continuity and consistency across all of Japanese industry, and between Japanese companies of all sizes. Following Clark, then, I propose that the term 'lifetime employment' is an ideal which all companies, as employers, have, over time attempted to realise, but at the same time, 'long-term commitment by both an employee and employer' is also a consequence of the ethics and practices I outlined at the end of the previous section, which are to be found in workplaces ranging from one or two persons, to ten thousand and more.

It is evident that the majority of the Japanese people perceive a company to operate a 'lifetime employment' policy on the criterion of whether or not the members of that company mutually agree that the company does operate such a policy (Clark 1979; Kondo 1990). As Clark (1979) suggests, all companies aspire to adopt the practice of 'lifetime employment' in order to send a signal that they have reached a certain culturally significant level of success. From what Clark tells us, companies tend to do this when they have reached a certain number of employees. This figure is arbitrary, however, depending it seems, on which classification of what constitutes a 'large' company the board of directors choose. In Clark's example, this figure was one thousand employees (Clark 1979), Kondo's figure was three hundred (Kondo 1990). Consequently, what indicates whether or not a company operates a 'lifetime employment' policy, is not its size, but whether or not the members of the company say they do.

However, realising that policy is as much a consequence of a mechanism inherent in the 'society of industry' (Clark 1979), as it is dependent on whether or not a company operates a 'lifetime employment' policy. As Clark makes clear, the order of ranking of the major companies in all the major industries in Japan is common knowledge among the population, and locks into the standard ranking system within all companies (Clark 1979: 106), to create a structure in which it is conceivably possible to locate every employee in the country relative to each other, through a process of recognizing the affiliation (*shozoku*) of individual selves to 'affiliated groups (*shozoku shuudan*)', that is, their companies. This is what Clark calls 'the society of industry'. This point is important because it indicates two things. (1): the extent to which there is consistency and continuity across the 'society of industry', in other words across society as a whole, and (2); codes of conduct and practice among companies at the top of the 'society of industry' constitute the lives of all individual Japanese to varying extents. For these two reasons alone, any 'collapse' or 'unravelling' of 'the lifetime employment system' has to regarded as significant and worthy of investigation.

A person's company is still the initial, and the major index of orientation between selves for most Japanese (Abe 1995). Such information will be more important to some than to others, but this fact remains: which company a person is 'affiliated to (*shozoku suru*)', is the primary reference which

still the majority of individual selves use to locate other individual selves relative to Ego.[6] Stemming directly from the fact that a person's company, or absence of company, constitutes their identity, albeit to different degrees, a 'society of industry' is continually reproduced, while at the same time in a state of flux, constantly dynamic and contingent.

A utilitarian mechanism within the 'society of industry' which engenders 'lifetime employment' as a practice, is responsible for creating an increased rigidity within the upper echelons of the 'society of industry'. It is this increasing rigidity which results in an increasing immobility between companies in both horizontal and vertical planes, and which accounts for a higher incidence of 'lifetime employment' workcourses in the upper echelons. Immobility is then compounded by the practices and ethics which promote what Nakane rightly perceives as a privileging of 'frame (*ba*)'. This has been most immediately identifiable in the practice of taking inexperienced personnel once a year, and training them up in 'the ways of the company (*shafu*)' instead of recruiting experienced skilled personnel as and when they are needed, all year round. The skills graduate employees pick up could easily be taken to another employer, only there is still the perception among many that skills learnt with one company are not easily transferable. This is consistent with what Nakane refers to as a "method to create an internal organisation which will tie individuals...to each other" (Nakane 1970: 9). This is changing, however (**5.2, 5.4**). This perception of non-transferability is part of an employment culture and work ethics which do not promote mobility, and which helps to engender 'lifetime employment'. The fact that people do move does not negate or deny the validity of the ideals (Clark 1979). We have to look at individual cases, at what motivates people to move and, as Rohlen (1974) points out, what motivates them to stay.

When discussing why people stay or move with Japanese, generally speaking, people really only think of leaving or staying in terms of Good and Bad: Staying is good, moving is bad, although, again this is changing (**3.2, 3.3**). Under the overarching broad ethical prescription of Staying : Good :: Bad : Moving, the 'society of industry' has engendered mobility at the lower end and immobility at the higher end. This situation is driven by the structure of the 'society of industry', together with an individual's desire to maximize their position within the 'society of industry', against a background where, generally speaking, the higher up the 'society' an individual moves, the more s/he is satisfied and the more s/he has to lose by moving. At the same time, this utilitarian motive is prescribed by cultural factors, so that while many people will consider moving, as Rohlen (1979) tells us, these utilitarian motives will be tempered by cultural prescriptions pertaining to commitment, which motivate people to stay. At the same time, the degree to which people stay with the same company is, to a considerable extent, also dependent on the name of the company and its position in the 'society of industry'.[7] The higher the company is in the 'society of industry', labour immobility increases for the following reasons: (1) the employee is less likely to be unsatisfied; (2) they have more to lose by leaving, and consequently; (3) these reinforce the bonds between members

[6]This is also the case for women who do not work, for they are invariably assigned to the position of their husbands or fathers.

[7]While there will be exceptions to this, when the 'society of industry 'is viewed as a whole, such a trend is evident. Having said that, members of small companies may be very satisfied, with many examples of 'lifetime employment' possibly being documented. Also, people do leave coveted jobs for various reasons.

of a company, which in turn, due in no small part to the ideology of 'company as family', has made changing jobs more difficult and less likely. An employee has been less likely to be unsatisfied for a number of reasons, which include the following: (1) the kudos, or social capital within society as a whole which comes with working for a prestigious company; (2) the remuneration received when working for a prestigious company will itself be satisfying when considered against standards of remuneration across the whole of society. Employees have also had more to lose by leaving as the likelihood of gaining a position in a company higher up the 'society of industry' is reduced compared to lower down the 'society', because the 'society' is like a pyramid.

Immobility has also been engendered by the ideology of 'company as family'. As Rohlen (1974) and Kondo (1990) describe, this feeling of family is propagated by various means and by various individuals in various settings, both those created especially for such purposes and in the course of a day's work. A Japanese friend of mine quite emotionally impressed on me that nobody really thought of their colleagues as their family, but that the notion of family was felt as feelings of dependence and of being unable to survive outside the company, as well as feelings that the individual self relied on the company for self-actualization, success, and existence, even. I was told that these sentiments often only come out when somebody makes it known to colleagues, friends, or family, that they are thinking of leaving, at which point they are told that it is not possible to survive outside the company. This happened to the president of the software company I worked in, when he decided to leave Tōshiba and set up on his own (3.2). My friend became very angry and emotional as he described to me how companies, regardless of size, more depending on the 'colour' of the company,[8] would work hard to 'disable' the employees, to make them believe they were unable to function or survive outside their company, not for the sake of the employee, but for the sake of the company. The degree of these feelings would vary from individual to individual, but as my friend told me with regard to himself, everybody would to some extent have these feelings, which would be sensitized and drawn out by any talk of leaving.

Looking further down the 'society of industry', or at the bottom, employees have much more to gain by moving and much less to lose. Consequently moving is more common, and can appear to those who regard length of tenure as an index of working practices and work ethics, that a different set of practices and ethics exists. This is not the case, and even if difference is discernible, this is a case of difference by degree, not in kind. Also, employees in small companies do work for the same employer for years, even though there is no 'lifetime employment' policy in evidence. What determines whether employees move are feelings of personal satisfaction mediated by personal responsibilities to others, together with social and cultural ideals that extend across the whole of society. There was no 'lifetime employment' policy at the small steel company I worked at, but chopping and changing jobs was hardly regarded as an acceptable practice.

Clearly, whatever utilitarian mechanism can be identified in the increasing immobility within the 'society of industry', the relationship between individual selves and collective selves suggested by Nakane's (1970) 'frame' over 'attribute' thesis, or by Befu's (1980) 'group model of

[8]The 'ambiance (*fuiiki*)' of a company is described as its 'colour (*shiki*)' by Japanese. I was given the following examples: Sony/Canon - Liberal; Matsushita/Hitachi - stingy; Big Banks - Conservative; Trading Companies - military-like.

Japanese society', affects how the mechanism operates, even at the lower end, where a 'lifetime employment' policy is invariably absent. Cultural ideals which span the whole of society have far more influence than 'lifetime employment' policy, and where a 'lifetime employment' policy is recognised to exist, this does not negate these cultural ideals, but instead builds on them, again indicating the high degree of consistency and continuity of codes of conduct and working practices across the whole of the 'society of industry', and of society as a whole.

*******

## 2.3) 'Lifetime Employment' After the Bubble

I have been arguing that 'the lifetime employment system' is a matrix of ethics and practices which can be found throughout the whole of Japanese society, and that talk of 'the lifetime employment system' collapsing or 'unravelling' refers, not simply to whether the practice of 'lifetime employment' will be phased out, but more accurately to whether the codes and practices which have engendered the ideal of 'lifetime employment' will be phased out.

Yamamoto, an economic correspondent for *Asahi shimbun*, refers to both 'the practices of lifetime employment' and 'the lifetime employment system' (Yamamoto 1993: 381). She discusses 'the practices of lifetime employment' as an employment ideal. She tells us that employers who have made 'tacit promises' (Yamamoto 1993: 382) to guarantee 'lifetime employment' are now rescinding on those tacit promises made to current employees, and not making those promises to new recruits. These changes in ethics and practices, however, are only two of the most sensitive changes. A more general 'restructuring' is underway (3.3, 3.4, 5.1, 5.2) and it is in this sense that we can meaningfully say that something which very much exists is being questioned and changed. This shift in employment philosophy and practice has not been easy, as Yamamoto tells us:

> Management's restructuring efforts to date have had little impact on the bottom line...because of the persistence of the practices of lifetime employment and promotion by seniority. These practices, traditionally followed by Japan's leading companies, make it impossible for management to lay off workers at will, no matter what the cost keeping them on might be the company's health (*Yamamoto 1993: 381*).

One thing that emerges from this quote is the apparent impotence of 'management' in removing the practices of lifetime employment and promotion by seniority. The coercive effect that keeping up appearances within 'the society of industry' has had on companies is one reason for its resilience, another is the widespread belief in the 'rightness' of 'lifetime employment' held by employees and by the public at large. Most important, however, is a genuine desire on the part of companies not to rescind on an arrangement they have with existing staff. Yamamoto tells us of the public's reaction to the changes in employment philosophy and practice which were being forced on companies by economic conditions. *Asahi Shimbun* reported in January 1993 that Pioneer Corp. had handed thirty five of its managers notices of separation:

> The news proved profoundly disturbing to the Japanese public. As other media picked up on the story, a sense of popular indignation and betrayal began to build. Newspapers and television stations were flooded with letters and phone calls condemning Pioneer and questioning whether the action violated labour laws [while] Pioneer's managers viewed the companies action as an inexcusable breach of trust (*Yamamoto 1993: 382*).

The widespread belief in the 'rightness' of these practices among the general public and employees, would seem to extend to some imagining that 'lifetime employment' was enacted into law. 'Lifetime

employment' is a powerful ideal, and when Yamamoto talks of 'lifetime employment' unraveling, she is referring to the fact that the ideal of 'lifetime employment', as well as other ethics and practices, are being discarded by employers. We know already that many employees find it expedient to leave an employer, while still upholding the ideal (Clark 1979: 176), but whereas employees, and the public, could uphold the ideal while dropping the practice as it suited them, without damaging the ideal, employers could not. For the ideal of 'lifetime employment' to exist, companies had to be seen to be practicing it. It was not expedient for employers to uphold and propagate the ideal and rescind on the practice when it suited them.

*******

'The lifetime employment system' as a matrix of ethics and practices in a given company may well be undergoing radical revision (**3.2**, **5.1**, **5.2**), but the practice of lifetime employment looks as though it will continue, albeit in a more restricted way, and subject to the performance of an employee. Kaneko (1997), Director of Labour Policy at the Japan Federation of Employers (*Nikkeiren*) and author of a major policy document on changes within the workplace, regards 'long-term' employment as having a continued value, but is likely to be just one of three employment 'portfolios' in an increasingly fluid labour market (Kaneko 1997: 158):

> a) The first is the long-term skill accumulation group, based on traditional LTE [Lifetime Employment], and a desire on the part of both the employers and the employees in question for long-term employment.
>
> b) The second group will help resolve certain corporate dilemmas by making available high-level specialised skills, though not necessarily on an LTE basis.
>
> c) The third group will include various types of workers, required on the one hand by companies to do a range of tasks from the traditional to the highly specialised, and, from the employee side, ranging from those wanting to utilize leisure time to those wanting to use specialist abilities (*1997: 156*).

Kaneko outlines a number of 'concrete measures' which companies should consider, 'in the face of structural changes in the economy', and 'diversified employee consciousness' (Kaneko 1997: 158):

> [T]his will involve the following considerations. First, companies will have to be able to secure or supplement the human resources they need, when they need them. This will require a more flexible use of human resources than in the past. To be able to deploy resources rapidly, according to need, will require more active participation in the external labour market, and this will require substantial adjustments within companies...Second, the recruitment of new graduates will remain pivotal in the future, but attempts should also be made at all-year-round recruiting of 'near-new graduates' and mid-career workers...In order to have the right skills at the right time, flexible recruitment...should be considered (*1997: 158*)

These suggested changes are discussed in greater detail in **5.1** and **5.2**. Kaneko then finishes in the following manner:

> LTE has contributed to economic growth and social stability in post-war Japan. It has evolved in response to a changing economic and social environment, and will continue to evolve without being abandoned. In the coming years, changing management needs

and employee demands will result in a more diversified employment system (*Kaneko 1997: 158*).

Graphic Automation (GA), the CAD software company I studied, and which I turn to in the next chapter, has already adopted an 'employment portfolio' very similar to that suggested by Kaneko. At GA, 'lifetime employment' departs from the common understanding of 'the lifetime employment system' in important ways. First of all, all employees joining the company can opt to be either 'lifetime employees (*sei shu in*)', or 'contract employees (*keiyaku shu in*)'. As Kaneko suggests when he talks of the need for a recognition of 'diversified employee consciousness' and 'employee demands', GA gives their employees the choice. 'Lifetime employees' are not privileged over 'contract employees' in any way, a marked departure from 'lifetime employment system' company practices, which privilege 'lifetime employees' over other employees. Secondly, there is no discrimination on the basis of gender or age. At GA, the majority of the employees are 'lifetime employees', including 75% of the female employees, who make up 30% of the total work force of the company. Most of the employees are also mid-career entrants. That is, they have worked for other companies prior to joining GA, yet they are still considered 'lifetime employees' at GA. As Kaneko suggests, in GA, the type of task together with the wishes of the employee primarily dictate whether or not an employee will be a 'lifetime employee' or not. An important point which emerges from the example of GA is that 'lifetime employees ' are not privileged over other employees in the workplace, neither are they regarded as more important.

Kaneko notes: " [C]ompanies will have to be able to secure or supplement the human resources they need, when they need them. This will require a more flexible use of human resources than in the past" (Kaneko 1997: 158). This shift in attitudes to recruitment by companies is discussed in **5.4**. Matsuda-san, president of GA is well aware of this, and although he personally prefers 'lifetime employment', working in the fast-moving software industry he is aware of the advantages of employing staff when they are needed (**3.5**). Matsuda-san's preference for 'lifetime employment' does not mean that he is in favour of age seniority practices, or of the hierarchical, factional structure which has come to characterise Japanese companies in the post-WWII period, many of which derive from the ethics and practices associated with 'the lifetime employment system' (**2.1.**). GA is structured in a fundamentally different way (**3.2**, **3.3**, **3.4**), yet Matsuda-san prefers 'lifetime employment'. This suggests that even as companies restructure and begin to institutionalize their employee's individuality (*kosei*), this will not automatically lead to the demise of the *practice* of 'lifetime employment', even though we appear to be witnessing the demise of 'the lifetime employment system'. Consequently, we can say with some confidence that 'lifetime employment' will continue, but will be part of a different matrix of work ethics and practices.

The fact that GA has 'lifetime employment' draws our attention to at least four important points regarding 'lifetime employment' in post-Bubble Japan. First, it indicates that 'lifetime employment will not disappear as companies restructure and encourage individuality (**3.6**). Second, it indicates that not only Japan's elite companies offer 'lifetime employment', but that smaller companies, including the latest high-tech venture businesses like GA, also see benefits in 'lifetime employment' for the future. Thirdly, in the case of GA, lifetime employment is even being

broadened to include female employees, as all employees are offered the choice of 'lifetime employment'. And finally, in the case of GA, those employees who are ostensibly employed 'for life' are not privileged over other employees, do not regard themselves as above contract employees (*keiyaku shain*) in some way, and are not regarded by the other employees as superior in one way or another. Oaklander and Whittaker also make this point about smaller firms having long-serving employees (**2.2**), together with the point that new venture businesses, themselves small to medium-size companies (SME) are also offering 'lifetime employment' (Oaklander and Whittaker 1997: 174).

*******

## 2.4) From a 'Company-Centred' Society to a 'People-Centred' Society

This section introduces the idea of 'corporate-centrism'. One of the problems of focusing on length of tenure is that the other practices and codes of conduct which make up the 'lifetime employment system', tend to be overlooked. For this reason, it is useful to look at another model of the Japanese workplace, that of 'corporate or company centrism'. Okumura (1992) is Professor of Economics at Ryuukoku University in Kyoto and an authority on capitalism in Japan. In his paper *Corporate Capitalism: Cracks in the System* (1992), he argues that 'corporate centrism' (Okumura 1985, 1992) is the defining characteristic of Japanese capitalism rather than 'lifetime employment'. 'Corporate centrism' refers to the central role that companies, corporations, corporate groups, and task-orientated groups play in the lives of Japanese individuals, on an individual workplace level as employees, and on a national level in the national consciousness. Rather than foregrounding length of tenure, the term 'corporate centrism' focuses on the centrality of the workplace in people's lives. On a personal level, this has developed from employees being 'affiliated (*shozoku suru*)' to a 'closed social group' (Nakane 1970). On a national level, the privileging of companies was accomplished in the manner I described in **1.2**. At the personal level, Okumura argues that 'corporate centrism' is generated by two mechanisms. (1): "a kind of absolutism based on the precepts that a company is eternal and managers and employees alike should subordinate themselves to it" (Okumura 1992: 55). The other (2): "employees aim for higher status in the company hierarchy [so] that ultimately an employee's company consciousness rules his thoughts and his private life, reorientating every judgment towards serving the company's interests" (Okumura 1992: 55). According to Okumura, both these mechanisms developed after WWII, and resulted in 'company centrism', although the ethic of 'selfless devotion to one's superiors' and the moral aspect of 'occupation' described by Bellah (1985) (**2.1**) are clearly evident in this mechanism. Okumura also adds that, in addition to these two mechanisms, 'corporate-centrism' springs from: "the thorough and consistent diffusion of the philosophy [of 'corporate-centrism'] throughout Japanese society and the state" (Okumura 1992: 57). Rohlen also describes how *ie* 'ideology', is used to motivate employees, through the idea that *kaisha* ('the company') is omnipotent and eternal, and the current members are the custodians working for the continuation and improvement of the company for the sake of past and future members (Rohlen 1974: 47). Okumura then argues that this structure and ideology were bolstered by the privileged legal status of limited stock companies as 'artificial persons' (Clark 1979; Okumura 1985, 1992; Arai 1992). The government's privileging of companies over individuals to rebuild Japan, together with coercing the public to save in the national interest, also served to reinforce these developments (**1.2**). The 'society of industry' has then coerced companies, regardless of the size, to make demands on their employees which require them to put the company before family or themselves.

As I argued in **1.1**, dissatisfaction with the demands companies were making on employees began to appear through the 1980s. These dissatisfactions centred on long working hours, lack of

holidays, and lack of personal privacy, which are a product of the two mechanisms noted above. In line with this, Okumura continues his argument by foregrounding, not economic reasons why current ethics and practices are looking shaky, but moral reasons. Slowly through the 1980s, employees began to resist transfers (*tanshin funin*), while reports of *karōshi*, 'death from overwork', not only began to receive media attention, but also resulted in families taking companies to court for damages. These isolated, but widely reported, incidences of resistance were an indication of the feelings of resentment resulting from the growing consciousness that the rewards of Japan's economic successes were not being passed down to the people who were making it possible. The events which were precipitated by the Bubble (1.3) then revealed widespread dissatisfaction. As Okumura (1992) succinctly puts it: "Corporate capitalism has come under attack [because] corporations totally ignore employee's personal circumstances" (Okumura 1992: 59). Kaneko (1997) is aware of the need to address this when he says: "the company-centred lifestyle...threatens the balance with family and society" (Kaneko 1997: 154).

Morita (1992) is also aware of this, as the founder and former president of Sony makes us aware in an agenda which he thinks Japanese companies should seriously consider:

> I suspect that Japanese companies have reached a point where they need to thoroughly review their fundamental business practices. I believe they should consider the following points. (1) Shouldn't Japanese companies allow employees more holidays and fewer working hours, so they can enjoy their lives more? Wouldn't it be possible to move towards the American average of working hours, if not those of Germany and France? (2) Are salaries offered by Japanese companies enough to provide employees with a good 'quality of life'? Is the remuneration system of Japanese companies treating individuals fairly according to their contributions? ...(4) Are Japanese companies treating their vendors fairly, in terms of conditions, like purchase price and delivery times?

Morita mentions a number of other points, concerning shareholders, local communities in the vicinity of companies, and resources/the environment. Overall, his points indicate that 'company centrism' needs to be rethought, if companies are going to be able to motivate their staff and secure their loyalty in the future. Changing goals is a key point in the shift from a 'company-centred' society to a 'people-centred' society. Statistics suggest that Japan is changing from a society in which the majority regard work as being more important than leisure, to a society where more people think that leisure is more important. This watershed was reached in 1988, when an annual NHK[9] 'lifestyle questionnaire', conducted since 1955, showed for the first time that the majority think leisure is more important than work (Tsukio 1992). Government statistics indicate that this point was reached in 1996, in the annual white paper on leisure (Ministry of Foreign Affairs Web Page. 1/7/96). In another poll, the Japanese Electrical, Electronic and Information Union, *Denki rengō*, conducted a survey among factories in Japan, Korea, and China in the Autumn of 1994, which indicated similar findings (*Japan Times 16/7/95*). In a survey conducted by the Ministry of Labour in 1989, 90% of newly recruited graduates, male and female, responded that they would not sacrifice their private life for their company.

The disaffection with 'corporate-centrism' was fanned by a series of statistics issued in the

[9]*Nippon Hōsō Kaisha*: Japan Broadcasting Corporation

years just after the Bubble, which also suggested that the pursuit of economic wealth, while not in itself bad, had gone awry. In 1993 the nation was shocked by government statistics which revealed that 70% of teenage boys never speak to their fathers. Then a poll revealed that many Japanese men between the ages of twenty-five and thirty would not marry a Japanese woman as a first choice, many saying they would prefer a Phillipina or Thai wife because they would accept the role of wife and mother, unlike Japanese women today. Likewise, a number of Japanese women told me that marriage would mean they would have to give up their independence and they were not prepared to do that. Then there was the '1.57 shock': as the average number of children for a Japanese couple fell below 2.0. While this is recognized as a feature of advanced industrial societies, this was regarded as a cause for alarm in Japan, and was interpreted as another sign that 'society' outside the workplace has been allowed to suffer in the name of economic success.

A shift away from 'company-centrism' towards a more 'people-centred' approach is evident in the ethics and working practices at GA (**3.4**), with loyalty deriving from neither the company or the company's employees making demands on the employees outside normal working hours or outside the workplace, the modern example of 'selfless devotion to one's lord' (**2.1**). Rather than an ideology and discourses of 'company as family' pervading the workplace at GA, discourses of the family stay firmly outside the workplace, reinforcing the strict separation of work from the rest of an employee's life. This is what the shift from a 'company-centred' society to a 'people-centred' society actually involves. The shift to a 'people-centred' society is intimately tied to a shift away from individual selves being defined through 'affiliation (*shozoku*)' to individual selves being defined and judged on the basis of their individuality *(kosei)* apprehended through individual acts (**7.1**). In GA, the category of the individual is given primacy over other categories, including 'the company (*kaisha*)' (**3.3**). The employees at GA are encouraged to develop their individuality (*kosei*), and a major part of this involves acceptance and recognition of membership groups other than those associated with the workplace, and allowing employees to place other aspects of their lives and other membership groups above the company or at least on an equal footing.

In the case of GA, the employees are encouraged to live their lives and develop their selves outside the workplace. However, although this is being discussed by Kaneko and others (**5.1**), many established companies are having trouble shifting to this new 'people-centred' society which encourages the expression of individuality in the workplace and recognizes it outside the workplace. What I have termed a 'top-down' process in the case of GA and industry in general, because individualism is ushered in through the ethics and practices of the company, is taking time in many established companies (**5.4**). Many employees in these established companies, particularly the younger employees, are shunning the workplace as: "a circle of emotional attachment or nodal point of identity" (Kondo 1990: 174). They are seeking out their own circles of emotional attachment and nodal points of identity in what have been called 'private groups' by Miyanaga (1991) (**6.1**). The pace of change is slow within these workplaces, and Miyanaga argues that, as the expression of individuality emerges in the mainstream of Japanese society, individual selves look for settings other than their workplaces to orientate and define themselves, feeling unable to do so at work. Employees in a company like GA are encouraged to look outside the workplace to develop their

individuality, but GA is still the exception, not the norm. As Miyanaga (1991) argues, and as I will attempt to demonstrate using the example of underground dance music Techno parties, primarily young Japanese, that is persons up to the age of thirty five, are indeed forming 'private groups', 'groups entered voluntarily on the basis of personal commitment' (Miyanaga 1991), but not only because the pace of change to embrace individuality is slow in established companies. The growth of a flexible economy (Harvey 1989; 1990) creates working practices which give employees the opportunity to form collective selves, not on the basis of 'frames (*ba*), but on the basis of attribute by forming 'private' groups, forming circles of emotional attachment and nodal points of identity away from the workplace, 'entered voluntarily on the basis of personal commitment' (Miyanaga 1991). I discovered that these increasing numbers of people do indeed form 'private' groups (**6.2**), so that we can speculate that, in a 'people-centred' Japan which has embraced individuality (*kosei*), 'private' groups will vie with corporate groups as the primary locus of personal identity.

*******

## Conclusion

In this chapter, I have tried to demonstrate how current anthropological representations of 'the lifetime employment system' have tended to focus on length of tenure, which has obscured other aspects of working practices in large Japanese companies, together with their continuity across the whole of Japanese society. It has been necessary to address this distortion, in order to engage with the debate about changing workplace ethics and practice in Japan since the collapse of the Bubble, which has been presented as the 'collapse' or 'unravelling' of 'the lifetime employment system'.

'The lifetime employment system' in the anthropological imagination is essentially the practice of offering male full-time employees the guarantee of a job until the age of sixty (fifty five, before 1980). Consequently, anybody who was not a male full-time employee in a company which was regarded as offering 'lifetime employment', came to be regarded as outside this 'system'. This included male full-time employees who did not stay with their companies, for what ever reason. In addition, the incidence of male full-time employees who were guaranteed 'lifetime employment' who actually did only work for one company from graduation until the age of fifty five or sixty, was shown to be less than all those who were offered it. This data was then used to argue that 'the lifetime employment system' not only affected a minority of the population, but that over the years, an increasing number of this minority could not be accounted for under the 'system' either. Consequently the 'lifetime employment system' came to be regarded as a 'conceptual slippage' and a 'myth'.

Such a position fails in a number of important ways. By focusing on the practice of 'lifetime employment', and length of tenure in particular, the matrices of ethics and practices, of which 'lifetime employment' is an ideal consequence, came to be ignored. Focusing on length of tenure also leads to a position where the work ethics of male full-time employees who leave their companies come to be regarded as generically different from their colleagues who stay. Such a position is clearly wrong-headed and untenable. It also obscures the influence and immanence of the ideal of 'lifetime employment, and of the matrices of ethics and practices which engender it. Not only are all employees in a company which is perceived to operate a 'lifetime employment policy' subject to fundamentally the same codes and practices, there are no significant differences, if any at all, in ethics and practice between companies which are regarded as operating a 'lifetime employment policy', and those which don't. 'Lifetime employment' is thought to be an ideal which only the largest companies can afford, but smaller companies try to emulate the prestigious few. Focusing solely on length of tenure, has obscured the fact that most employees in Japan have been subject to these ethics and practices, to the point where companies that offer lifetime employment have come to be regarded as generically different in the anthropological literature. This is incorrect and obscures the consistency and continuity of workplace ethics and practices across society as a whole. The case of GA (3.5) and the findings of others (Oaklander and Whittaker 1997), also indicates that

small and medium size companies (SME) also offer 'lifetime employment', not to send a signal to the 'society of industry', as Clark suggests, but to achieve certain task-related ends. Yahata (1997), Kaneko (1997), Oaklander (1997) and Whittaker (1997) also hold the view that 'lifetime employment' has tangible benefits on worker morale, corporate development, and broader social stability.

Local conceptions of 'lifetime employment', and of a 'lifetime employment system', together with local conceptions of the role which these totems have in society generally, hold far more significance among the Japanese people than they do in anthropological representations. When Japanese say that 'the lifetime employment system' is collapsing, or unravelling (Yamamoto 1993), they are referring to changes to the prevailing values and practices of the workplace in Japan (**5.4**), which in turn legitimates values and practices widely held throughout society (Nakane 1970; Rohlen 1974; Bellah 1985; Hendry 1993). To talk of the 'lifetime employment system' collapsing is not to talk about changes to a particular working practice confined to a select number of male employees. Talk of the 'lifetime employment system' collapsing, or more accurately, being dismantled, refers to a comprehensive shift in work ethics and practices which is affecting the whole of society.

I then considered the future of 'lifetime employment' in the aftermath of the Bubble, and discovered that 'lifetime employment' is still regarded as having an important role, with certain tasks within a company being regarded as ideally undertaken by employees who will stay with the company for many years. That 'lifetime employment' will continue to exist, engendered by a different set work ethics and practices (**2.4**), is borne out by the example of Graphic Automation, a CAD software development and manufacturing company, where I undertook fieldwork. At the same time, it is recognised that other tasks, many of which were previously undertaken by 'lifetime employees (*sei shain*)' can now be better dispatched by employees who are employed under fixed-term contracts (*keiyaku shain*), even though these will be renewed in most cases, over a number of years. According to Kaneko (1997), under the new 'portfolio' arrangements, and again corroborated by the example of GA, 'lifetime employees' are not privileged over other employees. At GA, this is borne out by the fact that contract employees are just as likely as 'lifetime employees' to hold management positions (**3.2**). Although it looks as though 'lifetime employment' will be restricted to fewer employees, the example of GA suggests that this will include women, marking a fundamental shift in ethics and practice, while continuing the practice of 'lifetime employment' for a restricted number of specific task-related positions.

In the final section I suggested that 'corporate centrism' is a better model than 'the lifetime employment system' to understand and explain company structure and workplace ethics and practice, as it has developed in the post WWII period. It is also a better model to explain the process of change described as a shift from a 'company-centred' society to a 'people-centred' society. This shift away from the workplace in orientating and defining persons is accompanied by the rise of 'private groups', which is itself an indication of the increase in the numbers of people looking to express their individuality (*kosei*). I regard this establishing of individual selves by means of 'private groups' as a 'bottom-up' process, as primarily persons with no formal or legitimate means of expressing their individuality, that is to say, persons who cannot express their individuality in the workplace, seek other settings in which to do so. Before turning to consider this 'bottom-up process,

I want to look at a 'top-down' example: a company which encourages and nurtures individuality (*kosei*) through its organisational structure and command structure, while also continuing to regard 'lifetime employment' as advantageous.

## 3. *Uchi no Kaisha*: Company as a Collectivity of Individual Selves



This chapter begins to look in detail at the kinds of changes in attitudes to work, working practices, and relationships between employees, which are occurring in Japan at the moment. I will approach this through a study of a computer-aided design (CAD) software development company in Nakano, in the sprawling western suburbs of Tokyo. In subsequent chapters, I will attempt to demonstrate how these changes in attitudes, practices and interpersonal relationships, are redefining ideas about the individual self and its relationship to other individual selves.

The company is in fact two companies, Graphic Automation and GA Systems, collectively known as GA Group. It was founded as Graphic Automation in 1983 by the president, Matsuda-san, a computer software engineer by profession. Graphic Automation is the development and production company. GA Systems is the sales and administrative arm of the group. Graphic Automation currently employs forty seven people, development engineers, software testers, manual writers and editors, after sales engineers, etc. GA Systems employs seventy people, mainly sales staff in branches around the country, and administrative staff in Nakano. The company also has its main development centre in Yamanashi prefecture, just outside Tokyo, a development and sales centre in Beijing, and a development centre in Limerick in Ireland.

The first section concerns method: How GA was selected as an object of investigation. How that relates to the research question - not necessarily unproblemmatically or directly. I then discuss the development of the specific research questions relating to GA, once selected as an object of investigation. The research process is also considered, as this also is not a static process which moves along a predetermined course. The research process is also considered as a dynamic process in which the researcher is situated, attempting to maintain a predetermined course, while allowing for the research question to develop in the light of the incoming data. These and other issues concerning the framing, collecting and analysis, of the research data are addressed in Section One.

Section Two describes GA, in terms of its historical development and its organisational

structure. This is approached through the analysis and discussion of the one major semi-structured interview with the company president. Many of the criticisms levelled at Japanese companies discussed in the previous two chapters are held by Matsuda-san, and GA is a good example of a company which is built on the kinds of principles being advocated within the country, and discussed in the previous two chapters and in Chapter Five.

Section Three takes up from Section Two, to consider in detail the organisational structure and command structure of the company, primarily through the analysis of semi-structured interviews with the staff, and then through a process of corroboration, through my participation and observation as a part-time member of the company. The way in which organisational structure, and the distribution of responsibility within the company is engendered by and reinforces an ethics of individuality is discussed. I then demonstrate how this then legitimizes and consequently engenders a sense of the individual self as the primary unit of social organisation. GA is then compared to other companies in the literature on Japan, as well as in its current temporal and spatial context.

Section Four looks at how the organisation of space and time in the company reflects and reinforces the philosophical, ethical, and economic aims of the company, achieved through a radically reordered organisational structure and command structure, and an ethics of individualism.

Section Five considers the reordering of motivations and rewards which the reconfigured ethical base and organisational structure engenders and is engendered by. It is apparent that, as in the organisation of time and space discussed in Section Four, the manner in which employees are motivated and rewarded is also radically different from companies colloquially regarded as 'up-down companies' (*jõge gaisha*), a reference to the rigid, hierarchically structure which characterizes them.

Section Six, finishes the chapter by demonstrating that GA is a collectivity of individual selves, rather than a 'group' (*shuudan*). This was a distinction made by many of the employees themselves, as they described the relationship between the individual self and the collectivity within GA. The section title, 'Company as a Collectivity of Individual Selves', is a reference, indicating a departure from, the popular expression 'Company as Family', as used by Kondo (1990).

*******

### 3.1) Methods

I came across Graphic Automation by pure chance. An Irish friend of mine has his own English school in Tokyo and had often mentioned that lessons at a software company he taught at were very rewarding for him as a teacher. Alan, my friend, is also an acupuncturist and a qualified *shiatsu*[1] practitioner, and I knew that English lessons at this company ranged from the spiritual to the material, the tangible to the intangible, and all points in between. Unfortunately for Alan, he was knocked off his bicycle by a parcel delivery van one day, which put him in hospital for four weeks, and left him unable to walk further than the nearest convenience store for nearly two months. Alan's misfortune, however, was my good fortune. He asked me if I could take some of his classes, one of which was the class at the software company. "It'll be good for your research!", he quipped. At the time I was looking for a company to study the effects on personhood of the new working practices and workplace ethics which were being discussed everywhere in the media, but I didn't immediately think that Alan's software company might be the answer. I had been thinking along the lines of Sony or a large international Japanese company, and it was only at the end of the first lesson I took at GA that Matsuda-san, the president, asked me about my research, and told me that if there was anything he could do to help, just ask. In my journal I wrote about my first meeting with Matsuda-san and the two other employees who were taking English lessons at the time:

> 14/4/95
> The president was with Tōshiba for five years before he left to start Graphic Automation. After four years he had enough of not being able to use his ideas or initiative. He told me 'the company structure makes it impossible'.

I did not pursue the conversation, as it was our first meeting, but his reasons for leaving Tōshiba were exactly those which were driving the calls for change in the country, and which I was interested in studying. On the train home afterwards, I decided that, at the end of the last lesson before Alan returned to take over, I would ask Matsuda-san if I could study his company. I taught at GA on a Monday night for six weeks, which was a perfect introduction to what I had in mind. At the end of that six weeks, we were all on easy terms with each other and it was very easy for me to ask Matsuda-san if I could conduct some research in GA. He replied: "In principle, of course". I added quickly that I didn't yet know exactly what form the research would take but when I had a better idea I would contact him, and we left it at that.

This was an important turning point for me. I was elated by the prospect of studying Graphic Automation as I made my way from their offices, three minutes walk away from Nakano station. The path from GA passes through a large bicycle compound, which was still half full of bicycles at 8:30pm on a warm April Tokyo evening, and the combination of Spring in the air and the feeling that my research had taken a great leap forward, filled me with what seemed like an

[1] *Shiatsu* is Japanese finger pressure massage. *Shi* means 'finger', *atsu* means 'pressure'.

inappropriate level of excitement. But I realised almost immediately that it was the feeling of relief, that after months of worry about the direction of my research, chance had carried me in the right direction. As the train made its familiar journey to Shinjuku, I began to think about the role of chance in research. As I pondered on the experience of finding a company which fitted the one I was hoping to find to an extent beyond that which I could have imagined, through a series of bizarre events, I was drawn to make a connection between something I had learnt about life, but had not really understood about research. In life I had learnt to work with events, to set goals and pursue targets, but to always be ready to modify existing plans in the light of changing circumstances. This to me is common sense, yet only now was I reminded of Gadamer discussing 'horizons' of experience (Gadamer 1975). Gadamer tells me something about research which I apply to life almost without thinking, but which I had not applied reflexively and systematically to my research. The desire, more than that, the need, that my data corroborate my still unformed hypotheses concerning the effects of the Bubble and its collapse began to evaporate. Equanimity came over me as I realised that my security, and my piece of mind, lay in the authority of my empirical data and my relationship to it, not in my ability to collect data which supports my inarticulate hypotheses. This understanding came as GA appeared on my horizon.

After having taught Matsuda-san, the president, and a number of other staff on a Monday night over six weeks, I worked in this company on an occasional basis for nearly a year, as an English coach and translator, coaching staff members for speeches and meetings which they had to give, often abroad, and translating and preparing marketing and legal documents.

*******

I knew that it may be difficult to get access to a company which was undergoing the kind of restructuring programme typical of those being advocated (**2.3**, **2.4**, **5.1**, **5.2**, **5.4**). I had scoured my memory for any contacts that I thought might be able to introduce me to such as company, and couldn't think of any. For this reason, in the absence of any *kone* (connections), I had thought that if my first contact with a company was to be impersonal, that is, not through a mutual acquaintance, it would be easier to approach a large company on the basis of my credentials as a Ph.D research scholar at a well-known school.

Here was a significant barrier to a research project. Factors which did not relate to my ability to carry out the research, or relate to the quality of the research idea, can significantly affect the research. Circumstances outside those normally considered valid reasons for being unable to conduct research, such as lack of funding, ideas, or ability, can potentially scupper a research project or send it in a direction not envisaged by the researcher. Not every aspect of the research project or process is a decision made on the basis of free choice. Quite often, the researcher has no choice. The truth is, that the research project exists within a set of dynamic conditions, where fate and chance can play an important role.

Having stumbled upon a company through chance, rather than by logically and rigorously identifying and selecting one that would allow me to test my hypotheses, I then turned to consider the task of developing the specific research questions relating to this particular company. A process

which began immediately after my first visit to GA, on the train back to Shinjuku, and which consumed much of the following day - sitting in my two-room apartment scribbling in my notebook. The fit between GA and the kind of company I was looking for was remarkably good, which I regard as lucky. Therefore, I regard my research to have been influenced, not only by fate and chance, but also by luck. The researcher has difficulty accomodating these factors in the design of the research project, but they need to be recognised and discussed as part of the research methodology.

*******

It would be nice to say that my decision to undertake formal interviews at the earliest possible opportunity was also a decision guided by sound methodological reasons, over which I had complete control, but again this was not the case. Once again, the research environment played an important role in the timing, location, and setting of the interviews. Matsuda-san's words 'in principle', and a limit of one hour per interview, were key factors in framing the questions, and in the design of the interview. In this way, Matsuda-san took much of the control over the research process concerning the collection of data at GA, out of my hands.

I was asked by Matsuda-san to write a brief outline of my research objectives, and to give details of how many people I wanted to speak to, and for how long. I described my research idea and drew attention to the suitability of GA. I asked if I could interview twenty people, from different sections of the company, of differing degrees of responsibility, both men and women. I also said that the interview would not take more than one and a half hours. In the brief, I stressed that the research was for a Ph.D thesis, and that the confidentiality of the employees and of the company would be respected.

The reply came through Alan, who told me that Matsuda-san had agreed to give me access to GA. Twenty people was no problem, but the interviews would have to be one hour long. My decision to ask for twenty interviews was based mainly on logistical reasons. The interviews were to be conducted in Japanese, which I would have to transcribe and then translate, in order to undertake the close-reading and detailed analysis of language that I intended. Twenty interviews were likely to result in thirty hours of tape. With transcribing, translating, and analysis included, I knew that this number of interviews alone would result in months of work.

Alan told me that a Nonaka-san was waiting for me to call him. Nonaka-san was a *kachō* in the General Affairs section. He gave me a series of dates for me to choose from, all of which were in the next three weeks. Consequently, the timing of the interviews was taken out of my hands. They took place over three days, a morning and afternoon session with a break for lunch.

The location of the interviews, and the setting, were also decided for me. However, I judged this to be acceptable for two reasons. First of all, I was keen to keep disruption to a minimum, and cause as little *meiwaku* (bother) as possible.[2] Secondly, organising twenty interviews, as well as maintaining the same conditions for all of them would have been very difficult. I had envisaged

[2]*Meiwaku* is a word commonly used when people are referring to *sekentei*.

having to sit hunched over endless coffees in Subway Sandwich or Dunkin' Donuts, twisting uncomfortably on plastic seats trying to get comfortable, my interlocutor carefully shielding his or her words from those around us, who would undoubtedly be interested in the spectacle of anthropology in the making. Authority and validity would have been far less obvious under such conditions. And of course, I would have ended up with a tape of the interview garbled incomprehensibly somewhere underneath the Beatles or some Japanese *tarento*.

Having completed the interviews, I was very happy with the data I had collected, and any worries I had concerning my lack of control over the timing, location, and setting of the interviews evaporated. Anthropological method in action is often a trade-off between competing potentialities, all of them with their advantages and disadvantages, sometimes difficult to assess. In this case, I am sure my data would have been poorer had GA not been involved in the way they were. By the time I had returned to London to begin writing up, after I had worked at GA for nearly a year, I decided that I had made the right decision for another reason: Before I got to know the employees well, and before I became embroiled in company politics. As things had stood, the conditions under which all the GA interviews were conducted had remained very constant, something which is not necessarily easy to maintain in anthropological research.

*******

Upon my arrival at the company on the first day of the interviews, I was met by Nonaka-san, who took me to the meeting room and handed me a list of the day's interviewees, carefully typed in Japanese, with my name and university at the top of the sheet. I had thought it appropriate to dress in a similar way to those I was interviewing, in order to reduce the sense of distance between us. Consequently, I wore a suit and tie. I also calculated that this would give a sense of gravitas to the proceeding, which would impact positively in a company setting.

From the moment to stepped off the 'plane when I arrived in Japan to do fieldwork, I constantly reflected on the effect of my race, nationality, and gender on my perception of the country and my encounter with it. So it was with my thoughts about what I should wear to the interviews, and in the way I monitored and judged my relationship to the constantly developing research environment. When discussing the effect of factors such as race, gender and nationality, and of the role of the researcher in the research process generally, I think it is easier to first consider them, not only from the perspective of the design or the conducting of the research, but from the perspective of the quality of the data collected, judged against the best that has been presented and written about by anthropologists of all specialization's already. This is just another reason why it is important to read outside one's own field.[3] To me this is logical. On this basis, I can say with some conviction, that my race, nationality, or gender, did not significantly compromise my data. It undoubtedly affected it, but that is more difficult to assess, let alone quantify. The fact that I say that

[3]This raises the question of whether a bias exists across a whole canon of work, as it has done until very recently. If the whole body of anthropological work is by middle class white males of European descent, then this will only disguise the role of the race, gender, or class of the researcher, as it did. Today, with a body of literature written and researched by a wider cross-section of individual backgrounds, and with a consciousness of these factors now incorporated into anthropological theory and method, this method of comparing against other's work to judge the role of the construction of one's own self in the research, is more rigorous and more acceptable.

these factors did not noticeably compromise my data, and therefore my ability to collect it, should not be so surprising given the subject of the investigation. Clearly, I could have had a great deal more difficulty studying other aspects of Japan, as a result of being, for example, non-Japanese, or being male. These were considerations I thought about at the very beginning of the research process, when capabilities and resources are considered. The role of the researcher in the research project is first considered as part of the assessment of the overall feasibility of the research project. Subsequently, as I described above, I reflected constantly on these aspects of my own self, as I went about the business of doing anthropology.

*******

I had a little over two weeks to consider the subjects I wanted to cover in the interviews in order to test my thesis. I had been thinking about this and scribbling ideas for months, so it did not take much time to write the interview questions (Appendix A). I wanted to study the company's philosophy, its organisational structure and its command structure, and how these were interrelated. I wanted to study the reward system, motivational goals, the decision-making process, and how responsibility is located within the company. I also wanted to situate GA in its historical and spatial context. The structure of the interview was important. I wanted to lead the interviewee into the subject, with simple questions requiring short answers, to make them comfortable. Many of the questions involved concepts of a quite abstract nature. Therefore, I began with questions locating the interviewee within GA, followed by questions about the company's structure and the interviewee's working relationships. I then moved to discuss the key words which would become the focal point of the analysis. I was hoping that, with prompting and interlocution, these questions concerning the key words I was interested in, would lead the interviewee to answer at length.

The interviews were recorded using a tape recorder. This did not appear to present a problem. I was aware that some people might not wish to be recorded, but I assured people of the confidentiality of the interviews, and nobody stared anxiously at the tape recorder. There was also no alternative. Using a 'strategy of capture' (Cohen and Rapport 1995: ) which relies on narratives requires a careful and intricate dissection and assessment of language, which can only be achieved if the anthropologist has captured the nuances of intonation and choice of word.

The main research method, then, was a semi-structured interview using a combination of closed and open questioning. By 'semi-structured', I mean that I had a list of questions which I asked all interviewees, which was to serve as the basis of the interview, and which would provide the consistency of questioning required to build an analysis. I spent one morning writing the questions, in English, which I then left and returned to over the next two days for half an hour or so at a time, or when something came to mind which I wanted to add or change. I avoided closed questions completely in the formal questioning. Closed questions were asked spontaneously during discussion, to clarify points. Having arrived at a list of open questions which would take about an

hour to deliver and answer, I translated them into Japanese. There was no pilot interview.[4] In the interviews, some of the questions were not understood clearly, or seemed irrelevant in the light of some of the answers to other questions, and I therefore modified them by the middle of the afternoon session on the first day.[5] Although, the interviews were arranged to take one hour, they ran over by up to twenty minutes in some cases. This was not a problem, as some interviews took less than one hour.

As one interview finished, the interviewee would depart from the meeting room and tell the next person it was their turn. I usually had a break of a couple of minutes between interviewees, to stand up and stretch my legs, make a few notes, and assess whether the questions were working satisfactorily. No arrangements were made for lunch, and I therefore took the opportunity at the end of some of the interviews to ask the employees if there were any decent *ramenyasan* (noodle bars) around Nakano station.

At the time of the GA interviews, I had not considered interviewing more than one person at a time, believing that individuals in Japan are less likely to be frank and open if in the company of others. Therefore, being confronted with an interviewing schedule of one-on-one interviews was judged to be acceptable. In view of the fact that I was very happy with the GA data, I would most likely have chosen to do the GA interviews in the same way, if given the choice now. Even though the employees at the company are encouraged, required even, to express their 'individuality (*kosei*)', or their 'selves (*jibun*)', and are defined as 'equal (*taitō*)', not only by each other, but by the organisational structure and command structure of the company, they were colleagues, many of whom hardly knew each other, not friends who would be more likely to speak more openly with each other. In addition, the company was a more formal interview setting than the more relaxed settings in which I interviewed the party-goers, which I believed suited a more confidential style of interviewing, such as one-on-one.

I wondered if such close proximity to the workplace, and so evidently with the authority of the company, would adversely the interviews, or bias them in some way. On the basis of the data, I would say that this proximity was not detrimental. People were clearly willing to talk to me, and to apply themselves. None of my questions directly asked for opinions on the company or on members of the company, and I carefully assured everyone of the confidentiality of their responses. The setting of the interviews, was certainly different from that which I could reasonably have planned, organised as they were by GA. The setting was very formal, something that I attempted to de-emphasize, a little, but which I'm sure was crucial in making the interviewees apply themselves to the questions seriously. The interviews took place in the meeting room, which was also the boardroom. It was a rectangle of about ten metres by five metres, with a large polished wood table surrounded with fourteen black leather chairs. I sat at one end, and the interviewees would enter

---

[4]Six months earlier, I had written a structured interview, which when tested on a number of friends (some of whom I eventually interviewed for Chapters Six and Seven) ran to over three hours. This endeavour certainly gave me practice and experience in designing and writing an interview.

[5]Question 15 (see Appendix A) . The question was designed around terms used by Inoue (1977), but none of the interviewees understood, or had heard of the term *junkyo shuudan*, which translates as 'reference group'. My first thought was that my pronounciation was the problem, but nobody understood the term when I wrote the chinese characters, either. They were more familiar with *shozoku shuudan*, which translates as 'membership group'. See 4.4 concerning *junkyo shuudan* and *shozoku shuudan*.

from a door on the side at the other end of the room. They were required to walk across the room, while I stood and waited for them, before offering them a chair. Authority and validity were not in doubt, and very visible.

I started the interview without any introduction, a tactical decision to keep preconception to a minimum. Because of the abstract nature of many of the questions, it often took the interviewees a minute or two of thought, maybe seeking qualification of the question, or repeating the question to themselves, starting and then stopping a couple of times, all before giving considered answers. All of which was carefully analyzed and meaning extracted. Some interviewees did not provide answers as long as others, but their answers did not in anyway suggest that they were wary of any repercussions from their participation. In fact, everybody was very candid. When I returned to the UK and was considering these issues, I concluded that this proximity, together with my association with a well-known school, and my business-like manner, all had the effect of conferring validity and authority on the research project, and had been instrumental in people making an effort to engage with the research questions to the degree they did. Many of the interviewees said they found the questions interesting, and this also must have made a difference.

As the interviewees came and went, it was apparent that Matsuda-san had carefully selected a cross-section of ages, departments, gender, length of time with the company, and even characters; ranging from the ebullient to the quiet. How were they selected, I wondered? At the end of my interview with Matsuda-san, held a couple of days after the other sessions, I asked him how the interviewees had been selected. He had asked for volunteers, by email, and had sixty three replies from employees expressing an interest in participating. He had selected twenty with reference to my brief. On the days when the sessions were held, not everybody was able to attend. In four cases, this was due to work which had to take priority. Two others had called in sick.

During the following nine months, I met a number of those whom I had interviewed, but we did not discuss the interviews at all. I made it clear that I was not undertaking research while I was working for the company, although I was open about anthropological fieldwork method. If people asked, and some did, I would tell them that I keep a journal, like a diary, in which I write notes and thoughts, but this did not seem to bother or concern people. After one or two incidents at work when voices were raised, or something unusual happened, somebody would always ask me if I was going to write about it, or if I did write about it, in my 'notebook'. I always responded with 'No' if asked about specific incidents or particular individuals.

*******

Having checked that the recording levels were satisfactory after each interview, I did not listen to the tapes for over a year, until I was back in our apartment in Oxford where I transcribed the tapes and translated them with the help of my wife. I did not translate the party-goers' interviews until I had completed the analysis of the GA tapes, and written Chapters Three and Four. The way in which the analysis progresses through the thesis maintains the integrity of this process. This is evident in the analysis and discussion of the word *shuudan*, and in the argument concerning the transformation of the individual self to a more individualistic self. The same is also true for the

analysis of *seken* and *sekentei*. It was only after the translation and close-reading of the party-goers' interviews, after having written the chapters about GA, that I was able to draw the conclusions I did. I did consider rewriting Chapters Three and Four to include these findings, but decided that the thesis was more interesting if it unfolded like a detective novel! Maintaining the integrity of the way the data is analyzed also reveals the process of the analysis if the final results are left until the end.

*******

### 3.2) The Only Way is Out

Matsuda-san graduated from Kyoto University with a degree in Computer Science in 1978, and joined Tõshiba as a systems engineer that year. He was immediately confronted with a situation whereby he could not develop any of his own ideas. "I was the lowest cell in a big system. In that environment it was very difficult for me to develop my ideas for company products. It was very difficult for me to work directly with the market". When he had been with Tõshiba for about two years. A friend of his had casually asked him if it was possible to develop a drawing system for a personal computer. Stimulated by the challenge, during the evenings and at weekends Matsuda-san worked on a subsystem of a full-sized CAD system. It took him six months, at which point he showed the software to a friend of his who was an expert in CAD software. "He was very surprised. He said it was incredible to make such software for a PC".

At first Matsuda-san tried to have his software made by Tõshiba ; "but it was impossible because my division worked on computer systems for the government. Tõshiba had a CAD division, but it was very difficult for me to transfer because I had my work on Government projects". I asked him if the CAD division at Tõshiba knew about his software. "I don't think so. It would be unlikely that my boss would have said anything because he needed me, and they had their own projects". I then asked him if he couldn't have approached the CAD division himself. "No that would have been impossible, I couldn't approach anybody myself, directly". Even if he had been in the CAD division, he thought that he would not have been able to develop his software. "I was the lowest in the company and those above me had their own ideas, I'm sure, so I would have had to wait my turn to develop my product. Also, nobody had developed a CAD for PC and they probably would have thought it was a badly conceived idea". When Matsuda-san told his boss he wanted to leave, his boss tried vigorously to discourage him:

> Everybody was against it. At first my family didn't think I could make it on my own. They thought it was much better if I stayed with Tõshiba . My boss at Tõshiba said the same thing. And then the head of the factory where I was working came to my house and talked to my parents, and asked them to stop me leaving. But my father understood the situation very well, and said that if I had my own vision he would help me. To begin with, Tõshiba asked me to wait for three years because I was working on important projects for them, but if I waited three years, maybe the opportunity would pass. So, my boss negotiated with the company that I could leave after six months.

I asked him whether Tõshiba tried to make him stay by offering him the chance to develop his software; "No, but that would have been impossible because Toshiba's CAD division was working on other projects".

Here we have a good example of the kind of organisational inflexibility at the centre of the restructuring debates (5.1). Ideas can only be developed from very specific points within the organisation. Such inflexibility is created by a self-interest which is the result of status accrued through an inward-looking inter-factional competition of the kind described by Nakane (1970) and

Uekusa (1995), rather than an outward-looking customer service (CS) orientated reward structure. It was not in the interests of Matsuda san's boss to try to help Matsuda-san develop his software for three reasons: (1) He had his own Government contracts to work on which needed to be completed within a given time; (2): Matsuda-san was a valuable member of his team, and losing him would jeopardise those targets; (3) his division was in competition with other divisions, in terms of targets, on which Matsuda-san's boss' own reputation rested. Directly related to this final point, the CAD division were protective of their own staff and their ideas. Matsuda-san put this down to *habatsu* (factions): "Yes, there are many *habatsu* in Tõshiba , and they are very inefficient". Nakane's (1970) description of *habatsu* is recognisable in Matsuda san's account of Tõshiba :

> *habatsu*...are preoccupied with interpersonal relations inside factions, interrelations of factions within-a-faction and interfactional disputes. Thus, the goals of the organisation tend to be deflected (*Nakane 1970: 55*).

The organisational structure of the Tõshiba factory engendered a double blow for the company in this case: the loss of a very capable employee, and the loss of ground-breaking technology. Matsuda-san eventually left Tõshiba in March 1983, at the age of twenty five, and started Graphic Automation from a single room in Nakano. He contacted a famous venture capital software company called Softbank, which at that time had been established two years previously by a Mr Sung, himself only twenty two at the time. "I contacted them in 1982. At the time, Softbank were a successful distribution company, now they are the biggest. I told Mr Sung about my idea and he suggested I meet somebody he knew who had a company (called YDK) which sold CAD systems. The president of the company was also a graduate of Kyoto University, the same university as me". I asked Matsuda-san if the fact that they went to the same university was a help; " Yes, it was a big help. He said he would sell my software to his customers. So, I finished my product and his company sold it for me".

No sooner had Matsuda-san set up shop in his single room in Nakano, when one of his former colleagues came looking for him. "When I left Tõshiba , they made me promise not to take any Tõshiba employees after I left, but one young engineer to whom I taught software technology came to me and said he wanted to help me. "I want to help you. I don't want a salary, I'll work part-time". "But I said I'd hire him part-time. There are many things to do to make computer products, such as programming, testing the software, making manuals, and also sales. One of his friends also came and worked for me part-time, so I had two employees". While there was just Matsuda-san, he did not have a title, but when he was joined by his first two employees, he became *shachõ*, "Company Executive Officer". To begin with, his two employees did not have any titles. "But after a while, one became 'Technical Consultant' and 'After-Sales Manager', and the other became 'Sales Manager'".

Initially they sold nothing, but the following year, they developed an upgraded version and sold one hundred packages in the six months from May 1984 to November 1984, and earned ¥20m. At that time, the 16bit PC arrived. Matsuda san's software ran between five and ten times faster on 16bit machines; "with 16 bit machines, CAD software became an essential system, so our sales increased rapidly, and after one year we earned ¥300m."

At this point, Matsuda-san came across one of the problems facing small companies:

recruiting high calibre staff. He wanted to recruit another software engineer to develop the company's products along with himself, but he could not attract new graduates from the top universities because they all wanted to work for NEC or Fujitsu, or IBM. He had two *arubeito* (part-timers) from a local university, helping with manuals and software testing, but when I asked if they stayed on when they graduated, Matsuda-san replied; "They wouldn't come and work for me, they went to work for Fujitsu". Matsuda-san had to use recruitment magazines[6] and had no luck in attracting anybody for nearly a year. He eventually decided to commission a big software company. "I was making a lot of money and wanted a better product, so I paid a big software company with many good engineers, graduates of Tokyo University or Kyoto University. I designed the specification and paid ¥50m, but after one year I got a product that was too big to work on a PC. It was too complicated and too slow, so it was difficult to sell. I didn't know what to do". Again he resorted to putting a classified in a recruitment magazine:

> One young boy of eighteen replied. He was a ticket puncher at Yuuenji Korakuen[7], whose hobby was designing software on his PC. I asked him what kind of software he developed, and he said; "a prolom compiler". 'Prolom' is an artificial intelligence software language, and a 'compiler' is a software to make language. He had developed a very complicated software, and it was only his hobby. At first I didn't believe him, but I showed him my specifications for my next generation CAD software, the same specifications I had sent to the large software design company. "OK, I'll try", he said. After nearly a year he came back with his software. It was a hundred times faster than the software I had received from that company, and ten times smaller. From that experience I knew for sure that software development depends on personal power, on individual ability.

I then asked Matsuda-san if he employed that boy; "Of course. He is now the top engineer in the company".

As Graphic Automation grew, the company experienced the kinds of growing problems that all companies are likely to run into. Matsuda-san is a software engineer by profession, and has already mentioned the various tasks that need to be done in a software development company. Initially he had two part-timers covering sales and after-sales, neither of whom were trained salesmen:

> I am an engineer, so I can control the development division, but a sales division was a big problem because I have no experience in sales, and consequently couldn't manage a sales division. So, I hired a sales manager and delegated the sales division to him. At first it worked well, but after two or three years it was difficult for me to control him, so I split the company into a sales company and a development company.

What happened next demonstrates the kind of problems which are likely to be occurring in many larger, longer established companies: a clash of shifting corporate cultures, as new ways of thinking and doing are introduced (see **5.4**). Matsuda-san first described his new recruit: "He was introduced

---

[6]Until very recently, employers considered it to be very inappropriate to recruit staff through recruitment magazines. This is likely to be for the following reasons. First of all, it transgresses a number of norms for recruitment: to recruit from school or university, or to recruit somebody who came by recommendation of a college, trusted friend, or family member. Recruitment magazines, until very recently, were considered to be very impersonal. Secondly, recruitment magazines have, until very recently, tended to specialise in low grade manual work and part-time work (5.2). A prestigious company looking for high calibre staff would not have wished to be seen attempting to recruit staff from among this pool of labour.

[7]Yuuenji Korakuen is a theme park, next to Tokyo Dome Stadium in the heart of Tokyo.

to me, and he also was not an ordinary man. He graduated from Tokyo University, and was very clever and very confident. To begin with he entered a large company, Nippon Steel, but left them to join a small venture company. But he didn't do well there, and when I met him he was unemployed". As unusual as he might have been, Matsuda san's sales manager was a traditionalist at heart. He began to build a *habatsu* in the sales division of the company, recruiting many administrative staff and creating new levels of management. This is what Matsuda-san was referring to when he commented: "it was difficult for me to control him". What was happening in GA Systems was the rapid development of a rigid hierarchical organisational structure, which went totally against what Matsuda-san was trying to achieve in Graphic Automation:

> Administration was increasingly trying to administrate us. To set out patterns of how things had to be done. An example was request forms. Increasingly request forms had to be filled out and submitted before anything could be done. It was becoming a big problem, because the internal business of the company was starting to become more important than developing and selling software.

Matsuda san's problem was to be solved by the collapse of the bubble: "I couldn't control him. His vision and my vision separated. Then, during the bubble economy, he borrowed lots of money from the bank to buy real estate. Then the bubble burst and sales dropped considerably. At that time, I said to him 'you have to change', so he quit and I became president of both companies. Then *risutora*, restructuring". The proliferation of employees in GA Systems made restructuring essential:

> At first I said to the GA Systems employees, if you intend to change companies in the next few years, please change now, quickly. I offered them a retirement payment, and 20%, all of those who had joined in the previous year, left. The payroll had grown quickly and we were left with the old members. I told them that if they wanted to stay, then please accept a salary cut. I cut salaries by 20%. The peak of the bubble was 1991, the bottom was 1992.

Since 1992, the company has had the following structure: "I am at the top, as managing director. Development has seven managers, one for each division. Each division is for one product, including a support centre. GA Systems has three managers, one head of sales, one head of administration, and head of sales branches. Then there are the members, but everybody is equal (*taitõ*)".

### 3.3) Command Structure: The Same in Name Only

> "At first my company had no structure. All employees were in direct contact with me, and had direct contact with the market. We had only one product, and just one layer" (Matsuda-san).

The desired characteristics of the organisational structure (*sōshiki*) and command structure (*shiki keiretsu*, *meirei shiki*, or *shireikeitō*,) at GA, are contained in the quote by Matsuda-san above. For him it is essential that: (1) all employees have direct contact with him; (2) all employees have direct contact with each other; (3) all employees have direct contact with the market. When he began telling me why he left Tōshiba (3.2), the three points he mentioned first were: that he "was the lowest cell in the company"; "he couldn't develop his own products"; and "he did not have direct access to the market". The organisational structure and command structure at GA eradicates 'lowest cells': all employees are equal (*taitō*). It promotes product development by individuals, regardless of position in the company, or department, and it gives all employees direct access to the market. 'Direct access to the market' means that all employees, regardless of what their job is, can develop their own products. This is what Matsuda-san was unable to do at Tōshiba. Developing products requires originality and individuality, consequently the nurturing of both is a prime concern at GA.

'Originality (*originarity*)', together with 'individuality (*kosei*)' are cornerstones of GA philosophy and practice. At GA, employees are encouraged to develop both originality and their individuality, not only by the exhortations of Matsuda-san or other employees, but through the structural organisation of the company. At GA, 'originality', and 'individuality' are not simply fashionable key words (Moeran 1989: 55), but are engendered by the structural organisation of the company, which, together with Matsuda san's personal philosophy, combine to create a web of practices and codes of conduct which then require the employees to act assertively and individually. From this, it is hoped that originality of thought and idea will result. This section looks at the command structure, to show that it is one in which hierarchy has been radically reduced, and where individuals have to take responsibility for their own work, and are encouraged to be proactive in developing their skills and company products.

In the course of my time at the company, and in response to my question 'What is your rank?',[8] I noted the following ranks: *shachō* (president); *buchō* (department head); *jichō* (assistant department head); *kachō* (section chief); *membaa* (ordinary employee). These are standard ranks which can be found in virtually all Japanese companies (Clark 1979). Both Rohlen (1974) and Clark (1979) make a point of noting that these ranks do not indicate the details of an employee's work or the interrelationship between employees (Rohlen 1974: 25, Clark 1979: 106). In view of this, GA departs from the examples presented by Rohlen and Clark in a number of fundamental ways. The work of managers in GA is defined by their title. The title *buchō*, *jichō*, or *kachō* defines the work of

[8] *Chii wa nan desu ka,*

those employees, whereas it does not determine their status relative to other employees. This is completely the opposite to what Rohlen (1974) and Clark (1979) recorded. Rohlen writes:

> Alone, rank primarily expresses status. Others recognise a person's importance and achievement from his rank. Although they may not know what his actual authority, role, or amount of reward is, people respect a person's rank (*Rohlen 1974:25*).

First of all, in the case of GA, there is no status attached to rank/ title. Moving from *menbaa* to *kachõ*, is neither automatic nor dependent on age. It is only possible if the employee shows a desire to assume a management position.

> *Kanri sha*, management, are not above *tantõsha*, ordinary members, in any sense. If somebody wants to become a manager and that person has a talent for management, they can become a manager. But a person who has no interest in becoming a manager or has no talent as a manager, they remain *taitõ*, equal" (Matsuda-san).

Again, unlike Rohlen's observations, rank/ title does not indicate importance, achievement, or seniority, while it does indicate exactly what a person's authority is, and what their role is. Finally, GA employees do not *per se* respect a person's rank, respect is tied to other norms which are discussed in 3.5.

Moving on to the command structure itself, there are in fact three levels in the company: *shachõ* (president); *kanrisha* or *shokusekisha*[9] (management); and *tantõsha* (members). *Kanrisha*, or *shoku seki sha*, are also divided into three levels: "*Buchõ* is top, *jichõ* is next, and *kachõ* is next. *Buchõ* is responsible for all, *jichõ* and *kachõ* are responsible for their own particular things, like *buchõ* too" (Matsuda-san). But Matsuda-san is keen to make it clear that this does not constitute three more layers of management:

> In a way it is, but it is not rigid. Traditionally, and particularly in a big company, those layers are so rigid. The president never speaks to a *jichõ* , or *kachõ* , or to a *tantõsha*. The president would only discuss with directors, maybe with *buchõ* , but usually directors speak with *buchõ* . But in GA it is not so rigid. I talk to all members, and they also talk to me, or a *tantõsha* talks with a *buchõ* , or a *jichõ* can talk to me. There are no rules about who can talk to whom. All of them have the same information. Of course I speak to *buchõ* most of all, and a *tantõsha* is more likely to speak to a *kachõ* or *jichõ* .

What governs who speaks to whom depends on who can most easily and efficiently answer the question of the moment. Because work is organised on the basis of 'work teams', members of a particular team are most often to be seen talking to members of that team, including the *shoku seki sha*. But the governing principle, in addition to the fact that there are no rules about who can talk to whom, is that you talk to the person who is most likely to have the answer. In the normal course of a day, I saw *tantõsha* asking *kachõ* questions and being referred to *jichõ* for an answer, or *tantõsha* speaking to *buchõ* because of the nature of the question. Everybody is connected by e-mail and has access to everybody, and as Matsuda-san mentioned above, everybody has access to the same

---

[9] *kanri sha* , which is the more usual term for managers, is more often translated as 'administrators', 'managers', 'supervisors'. *Shoku seki sha* is a term I haven't come across. *Shoku seki*, meaning 'duty', is a combination of the characters, *shoku*, meaning 'employment', 'occupation', 'work', 'job', post', 'office', '(professional) skill', and *seki*, meaning 'responsibility'. In the case of GA, Matsuda san was keen to use the term *shoku seki sha*; "because the *shoku seki sha* in my company are not like *kanri sha* in Tõshiba, for example". There is also a difference of emphasis between the two. The character *kan* is translated as 'exercise control', and the character *ri*, is translated as 'reason' or 'basic principle'. As a result *kanri sha* foregrounds the element of control, whereas *shoku seki sha* focuses on responsibility. The difference is apposite.

information. If a *tantōsha* has an idea for a product, that person can directly access GA Systems' files, GA Systems ostensibly being another company, for sales information on any of the company's products in order to make an assessment on whether the product might have a market. Such activities are encouraged.

At a glance, the structure of GA looks much like other companies. The ranks are the same, and contracts, which I shall come to later, are very similar. I asked Matsuda-san what is different between the organisational structure, *sōshiki*,[10] at Tōshiba and GA. He replied; "Number of management layers. We have two, Tōshiba had about ten". I then asked if this was because Tōshiba was a large company. "Yes", he replied. But when I suggested that if GA was as large a company as Tōshiba , GA would have ten layers of management, he quickly returned: "No, no, no. All companies are trying to reduce the number of administrative layers. Microsoft now has 20,000 employees, but only three layers of management". I asked what effect does reducing the number of layers of management have. Matsuda-san explained:

> It is very easy to change direction and stay in touch with your customers. Everybody is on e-mail, from top to bottom and from bottom to top. Anybody can contact anybody within the company, and is encouraged to do so. And also, now, I make a weekly report for all my employees in which I am very honest with them. We are going through a difficult time at the moment.

Removing layers of management , however, does not itself change the command structure, change an organisation from an inward-looking status obsessed one into an outward-looking customer orientated one, or redefine the ideal company employee. It is in this way that GA is radically different, yet at the same time displays the kind of organisational structure and command structure which is being advocated as necessary for Japan to continue to maintain its position in the world in the next century (5.1). Reducing layers of management will increase response times and efficiency, but it will not prioritize customer satisfaction or the free-flow of ideas around the company. This requires a redefining of selves and the relationship between selves in the workplace, which is a much more fundamental and radical project.

In GA, the development and production company, there are seven development groups, or 'work teams', with the largest, comprising of thirty members, having *buchō*, *jichō*, and *kachō*, and the smallest of three having just a *buchō*. Having assessed the sales potential of their product idea, our *tantōsha* , if the product idea relates to a different work team, can approach anybody in the relevant work team for any further information. This how the company is organised in order to encourage employees to do what Matsuda-san tells all new employees: "I tell them that in GA they can use their talent to make their own product". I suggested to Matsuda-san that in most Japanese companies he could not talk to a *jichō* because his *buchō* would be angry:

> Yes, very angry. But in my company, I could not have that culture. I think it is very bad. The top, such as the president, cannot get real information, or quick information. Decisions have to be made quickly to change course if necessary, so the president has to be able to speak to any level, and any level has to be able to speak to the president.

[10]The organisational structure, *sōshiki*, is not the same as the command structure, *shiki keiretsu*, *meirei shiki*, or *shirei keitō*. The organisational structure describes the position of every person in the company. The command structure describes the relationship between every person in the company, drawing attention to the distribution of power and responsibility.

I then suggested that people are not used to such a system and would be uncomfortable:

> Some, initially, but most people have no problem. It's the same with *habatsu*. Many companies have *habatsu*, with many people who do not want to join. But they are all expected to be a member of a *habatsu*. There are no *habatsu* here, no closed groups, with many bosses fighting each other. *Habatsu* are what people are used to, but they have no problem working here without them".

*******

I now want to turn to the personal accounts of the employees to see how they describe the organisational structure of the company. When considering the personal views of various employees, we are presented with opinions and feelings about working in such an organisation. Explanations come in terms of limits to thought and action, which are always partial. As anthropologists, we can determine what people do substantively, but we cannot so easily build up a picture from the various accounts to arrive at a framework, within which individuals act. The framework is only glimpsed, brought to life by acts of individual interpretation which give it meaning. We are therefore dealing with assumptions that individuals make, and to which we must give primacy. Meaning exists in the individual interpretations, which the anthropologist then knits together to provide a fragmented and often contradictory whole, itself an act of interpretation. As Cohen (1994) argues, the framework does not make people think in a certain way, but instead provides them with the means to think and act. The framework, which in this case is the organisational structure and within it, the command structure, is not monolithic and does not convey uniform meanings. As Cohen states: "there will be shared meanings, but there will be no orthodoxy. Members process...if not wholly as free agents, then at the very least, as interpreters" (Cohen 1994: 94). What is revealed below are aggregates of diverse experiences, interpretations which are the product of individuals negotiating, interpreting, and constructing frameworks, which only become visible through the actions, explanations and justifications of human beings.

- Yamada-san had been with GA for five years. He was thirty, and had been working for NTT as a software engineer. He was recently made *kachō*. and works in software development. "The command structure in our company is not fixed. All kinds of things passing directly between people is the norm."

- Wada-san was the eighteen year old who had been working at Yuuenji Kōrakuen, punching tickets. At the time of the interview, he was thirty five and a *kachō*, with no desire to assume any more managerial responsibilities (3.5). "Yes, there is a command structure. There is *shachō*, then *buchō*. There is some sort of separation between *buchō*, and those below, but there are often cases when *buchō* bypasses me, a *kachō*, and gives instructions directly to a member of staff. There is no 'top to bottom' like in a traditional Japanese company, which, to the extent it has a tradition,

is rigid and inflexible. At GA, there are divisions and there are sections, and we use those names, and persons concerned with a particular thing are located in a place associated with that thing, but it is very tentative (*ichiō arun da kedo*), and the people in those places operate in a very mobile and fluid way (*ryuudōteki ni ikou*)".

- Shinkawa-san had only just joined the company at the age of twenty eight. Previously he had worked as a programmer for one of Japan's largest department stores. He was a 'member', describing himself as a 'general employee (*ippan sha in*)' but is a 'contract employee (*keiyaku sha in*)'. "If you look at the terrain (*chikei*) of leadership, it is relatively free (*wari to free ni natteimasu*). Everybody is individually responsible."

- Matsubara-san was twenty eight and had been with GA for three years. She studied chemistry at undergraduate level, before going to the U.S. to study English for two years. She was a 'member', a 'lifetime employee (*sei sha in*) who worked in quality control. "The command structure doesn't exist. It is not at all ordered. To an extent, things run smoothly enough at the work team level, but to be honest, when it comes to completing a work schedule on time, it never happens. Also, rather than vertical senior/subordinate type relationships, more importance is attached to equal person to person relationships."

- Iwata-san was twenty nine and had been with GA for four months. He previously worked for Nippon Steel as a software engineer. He referred to himself as an ordinary member, although he was a 'contract employee (*keiyaku sha in*)' and worked on LAN (local area network) systems development. "I'm just an ordinary member, so I don't know much about orders that come from above. As for my relationship with my supervisor, rather than being exhaustive (*tettei*), I am urged to look for a new consciousness in myself and study those important things. "They are there, are you aware of them?" my supervisor says. It doesn't always follow that something happens, but I do have a genuine interest in what he is advocating. In relation to the work itself, it is important to absorb all this. Instructions from my supervisor are tough but there isn't really any rigidity or constant interference."

- Hinata-san was twenty nine and a *kachō* in GA Systems. He was on the sales side. "There are *buchō* and there is *shachō*, and staff, which includes me. The working practices (*shigoto no shikata*) include direct communication with *shachō*. Employees below me, including those directly under me, have direct contact with *buchō* and *shachō* on day to day working matters. This is possibly the company's 'way' (*sore wa ima no shafuu kamoshiremasen*)".

- Inoue-san was twenty four and had worked for GA since graduating from university with a degree in mathematics. She was a 'lifetime employee (*sei sha in*)' in the administration department. "The organisation of the company is flexible (*sōshiki wa kōchoku shiteinai tokoro desu*), although there are *kachō*, *jichō*, and *buchō* above me, and then *shachō*."

- Yamazaki-san was thirty six. In response to the question 'What position/rank do you hold?' (*chii wa nan desu ka*), he described himself as a 'leader' (*liida to iu koto ni natteimasu*), but was in fact a *buchō* . "The management structure is not built like a pyramid, where there is management, and under that middle management, and under them ordinary staff. It is relatively free. There is the president, and under that there are the various products, really."

- Ozawa-san was twenty five and was in the product planning department working on user manuals. She describes herself as an 'ordinary employee (*futsuu no sha in*)', but was a 'lifetime employee (*sei sha in*)'. She joined the company in January 1996, three months before the interview. "It's very ordinary. There is *shachō*, and under that *buchō*. It's very ordinary, much as you'd expect (*hontō ni futsuu no keiretsu ni natteimasu*). Then in my work team (*bushō*) there is *jichō* and *kachō*, then me. The other side of the fact that there is some freedom here, because nothing is fixed (*nan demo kimatteinai*), is that you need a lot of power (*powaa*) to be able to undertake anything".[11]

- Hashimoto-san was a *buchō* in the General Affairs (*sōmu*), or administration department, which is in GA Systems. He was thirty nine and had been with the company for two years. He joined as a *buchō* after having been a *kachō* with a cement company. "You mean the order structure? Each department has its head and each is self-supporting (*dokuritsu saisan*), or rather, has independent management. So there is the company, then there is the president, then there are various departments. Each of these departments has its own command order (*meirei shiki*) and the right of instruction (*meirei ken*). The whole company is then under the president's jurisdiction (*kankatsukan*). It is a venture company. In that sense, the company is a reorganised business (*seibi suru mono to iuka*), there was some industrial restructuring (*kigyō seibi*)".

- Sakamoto-san was twenty six. He describes his position in the company as "nothing particularly (*toku ni nai desu*)". He was an 'lifetime employee (*sei sha in*)'. "Many things come directly from *shachō*, but there are also many things which are arrived at through discussions at meetings with everybody concerned. There is an air of freedom around here (*shanai no funiki ga jiyuu ga arimasu*). There are no constraints on the development side (*kaihatsu stairu wa sokubaku sareteinai*)".

The ranks in the company mentioned by the employees were: *shachō* (president); *buchō* (department head); *jichō* (assistant departmental head); *kachō* (section head); and the ordinary members, which accord with Matsuda-san's account and my observations. Ordinary members gave various terms to indicate their position in the company. These were: *ippan sha in* (general worker); *futsuu no sha in* (ordinary worker); *futsuu no ippan sha in* (ordinary general worker); *toku betsu nai desu* (nothing special). Shinkawa-san, who had only been with the company a few weeks, described himself as a

[11]This point about needing energy to 'undertake anything' is extremely interesting. Energy is required to do any work. This is basic to our understanding of the universe, but the 'power' Ozawa san refers to is the will (*ishi*) required to act independently. The relationship between 'will (*ishi*)' and 'individuality (*kosei*)' is discussed in 7.1

*sei sha in* (lifetime worker),[12] as well as an *ippan sha in*, but nobody else made a reference to whether they were 'lifetime employees (*sei sha in*)' or 'contract employees (*keiyaku sha in*). There is evident continuity between GA, ostensibly a restructured company, and companies past and present which have not restructured, companies such as the Tõshiba Matsuda-san describes. Are the similarities in name only, however? The answer is, fundamentally, yes. The similarities are invariably superficial, resulting, for example, from meaning contained in the names of ranks held over from other existential situations in which the employee has encountered them. This is evident when watching new recruits getting accustomed to working at GA, and manifested itself in the way people referred to the various ranks in relation to Ego as being 'above' or 'below' in the interviews. Yet, even when such immediately obvious spatial metaphors are being used, with such potent directional implications grounded in common experience and social norms, on every occasion that I drew attention to the apparent contradiction between an overt emphasis on a culture of individual self-actualization and equality of selves, with a ranking system that embodies what Nakane referred to as a 'ranking consciousness' (Nakane 1970: 25), nobody thought it problematic, or strange. Later, when reading through the transcriptions of the interviews, I noticed a pattern in the answers which suggest there is not so much a contradiction as a combination of both hierarchy and equality.

I eventually decided that the subject of the conversation, rather than anything else, caused my interlocutors to fall back on concepts with which they were familiar, in order to explain the command structure to me. Obviously there is a vertical distance between *shachõ* and everybody else, and this orientation rather forced everybody into conceptualising their relationships with each other in vertical terms. Yet, it was plainly unacceptable to most to talk in these terms. A look at the quotes above shows how the explanations tended to begin with *shachõ* , which immediately framed the explanation in hierarchical structural terms. But by the end of the descriptions, the employees are searching for qualifications. The last sentence of the various descriptions, after having begun in vertical structural terms, ended with explanations such as; 'All kinds of things passing directly between people is the norm (*direckuto no iroiro na mono ga kekkõ ii n desu ne*), 'not fixed' (*tettei shiteiru mono dewa nai*), 'doesn't exist' (*shiki keiretsu wa boroboro desu. Keshite kakujitsu dewa nai*)', 'relatively free (*wari to furii ni natteimasu*)', 'there isn't really any rigidity (*jimuteki ni kore wo yaranakereba ikenai to iu men ni kan shite wa tettei shiteirun ja nai ka to omou n desu keredomo*)', 'everybody talks directly to each other (*directo ni menkyo wo moratte shigoto suru koto mo arimasu*)', 'flexible (*soshiki wa kõchõ shiteinai tokoro desu*)', 'everybody is individually responsible (*kaku kojin kojin no sekininka de hataraite ii to iu kanji ni natteimasu*)'.

*******

Do the titles in any way construct or define the relationships between the employees? Yes, but in a way not normally associated with these terms (Nakane 1970; Rohlen 1974; Clark 1979; Hamada 1992). *Shoku seki sha* within GA have specifically defined roles which refer directly to their work activities and their responsibilities. The organisational structure and command structure, together

[12] *sei sha in* is discussed in 3.4

with the codes of conduct which *require* employees to think for themselves, and to seek and convey information directly between employees, radically alters the relationship between *shoku seki sha* (kanrisha), and between *shokusekisha* and *tantōsha*. Also, Matsubara-san explained to me one day that nobody uses the titles at work, only Matsuda-san is referred to as *shachō* , and this was borne out by what I witnessed. Outside the company, rank is imbued with more traditional meaning by those with whom GA staff come into contact, but it is a self-conscious recognition or reinforcement of the 'society of industry' by GA staff, and not as strictly as in the manner Clark (1979) describes:

> because the ranks are standard throughout so much of Japanese industry, a man's rank within a company retains its meaning when he goes outside it. A department head [*buchō*] at Marumaru would be addressed by his rank when he visited a customer or bank, and he would expect to be received by someone with a rank appropriate to his own in the other organisation. The appropriate rank would not necessarily be that of department head. If he were visiting a big client, a Marumaru department head would see a section head [*kachō*]; for a section head in, say, Hitachi, might be responsible for more people than there were at Marumaru, and Hitachi could hardly be expected to produce a department head every time a mere supplier came to call (*Clark 1979:106*).[13]

This strict observance of formality and vertical rigidity is also described more recently by Hamada (1992). A GA *buchō* will head a delegation to a customer, or receive a customer, if the occasion requires it, but such duties are a part of the duties of being a manager, and are regarded as simply that by all GA staff. Status and rank are not linked, rank instead indicates a person's responsibilities. Responsibility for all employee's work resides with the employee, not with anybody else. A *shoku seki sha* is not responsible for the work of others, but is responsible for co-ordinating the work of others. That is their job, that is their responsibility. Also, in accordance with the convention within GA of not using titles when addressing each other, names rather than titles are used between GA staff at meetings with customers.

Comparing the decision-making process and the loci of authority and responsibility in GA with the examples provided by Rohlen (1974) and Clark (1979), allows for a comparison which highlights fundamental similarities and differences. The command structure of any organisation indicates the loci of authority and responsibility, and the process by which decisions are made. Yamazaki-san, the *buchō* of one of the development work teams told me: "The management structure is not built like a pyramid, where there is management, and under that middle management, and under them, ordinary staff. There is the president, and under that the various products, really". This is true, under Matsuda-san, everybody is equal, an opinion expressed by all employees. As Matsuda-san himself said: *kanrisha* (*shokusekisha*) are not above *tantōsha*. Nevertheless, as in a pyramidal structure, there is a concentration of power at the top of the company, in the form of Matsuda-san. Hashimoto-san, the *buchō* of the General Affairs (*sōmu*) department, also indicates that power is concentrated at the top: "Each department has its head and each is self-supporting (*dokuritsu saisan*), or rather, has independent management. Each of these departments has its own command order (*meirei shiki*) and the right of instruction (*meirei ken*). The whole company is then under the president's jurisdiction (*kankatsukan*)".

An incident which demonstrates that power is concentrated at the top was the restructuring after the collapse of the Bubble. Matsuda-san offered a set of conditions to the employees, which

[13]Clark's use of the word 'mere' in "every time a mere supplier came to call" (*Clark 1979:106*) conveys the sense of hierarchy within which the relationships he describes are bound up.

they were obliged to take. The decisions involving restructuring were made solely by Matsuda-san, which accords with Rohlen's point about urgent decisions being made according to hierarchy:

> One simple rule influencing office decision making is: the more urgent the decision, the more likely it will be made according to hierarchy. Another basic consideration, however, is that people favour group discussions wherever possible and have an expectation of participating in considerations of office affairs...This is also true of policies to which the chief has been committed by higher authorities. Office discussions, in this case, can transform an imperative into a solution endorsed and shared by everyone (*Rohlen 1974:107*).

Rohlen makes the point, that discussion occurs after the decision has actually been made, and the managers job is not to solicit opinions to decide policy, but to diplomatically implement policy. This is not the case at GA. Sakamoto-san also told me that: "Many things come directly from *shachō*, but there are also many things which are arrived at through discussions at meetings with everybody concerned. There is an air of freedom around here". This freedom comes in the form of an open and transparent decision making process. This means that in GA there is no seeking of consensus on decisions which are imperative, and there is open communication between all employees which allows ideas to reach the relevant loci of authority as quickly as possible. There is none of the tortuous balancing act, which Rohlen tells us that managers and those in positions of authority have to go through:

> A chief, anxious for the positive effects of group discussions, may hold many meetings but submit issues of minor significance. He might choose to discuss his own decisions with the group. He might also introduce a question only when certain that his opinion will prevail. The conclusions may be foregone, but the fact that discussions have been held is most important, for a chief is expected to share his opinions, ask for advice, and permit dissenting voices to emerge. His trust and respect for others and his acknowledgment of the group's importance, both symbolised by this process, are what count (*Rohlen 1974: 108*).

By trying to seek consensus on decisions which have already been decided, time and energy is wasted. At GA, the decision-making process does not include elaborate discussions on decisions which have ostensibly already been made. Except in unusual circumstances at GA, such as the decisions regarding restructuring in 1992, there is the opportunity for the sharing of opinions, the asking of advice, and the chance for dissenting voices to be heard, prior to a decision being made. In this way, a degree of power truly lies equally with all members, whereby their voice genuinely does influence decisions.

It is a manager's job to co-ordinate and delegate, and some degree of command is an integral part of these responsibilities. Usually in Japanese companies, managers (*kanri sha*) tell people what to do, but in the case of GA, this is not really the case. Managers make sure everything happens as it has already been decided and is understood by all concerned. Decisions are made at the work team level by everybody, consensually, in a meeting. The agenda for meetings is also set, not by managers necessarily, but by anybody. Managers may well put points forward for discussion more than anybody else, because their responsibilities include making sure that decisions get taken and carried out. Also, they are likely to have a better idea than anybody else what should probably get priority. Again, this is not because of any authority implicit in their job, although they do have authority, or because they have access to privileged information, which they don't, but simply because their job is to co-ordinate, which requires a knowledge of all aspects of a department's or section's work in progress. I asked Yamada-san how his *buchō* at GA differed from his previous company: "At GA, my *buchō* is responsible only for co-ordinating the work of our group. That is all". Everything is open to

question and criticism, both during meetings and in the normal course of a day. During meetings, to somebody unfamiliar with the company, it is not immediately obvious who is the president, or who are *shoku seki sha* and *tantõsha*. The organisation of space during meetings, or anywhere in the company, is markedly different from a company or any collectivity of individual selves more rigidly and markedly ranked (3.4). Discussion circulates freely between all employees. Ideas are circulated, scrutinized and discarded, resurrected and reconsidered, scorned and ridiculed, and implemented.

> Myself, I never make one-sided decisions for any employee. Also I engage in discussion, not as president, but as a member, like everybody else. All members, sales, administration, support, development, gather together and they are on the same level, in the same position (Matsuda-san).

Decisions regarding who should do what are also taken at meetings. Matsuda-san and all his *buchõ* do not get together behind closed doors and decide what is to be done, while the *buchõ* then decide who is to do what.

I asked Matsuda-san what kind of company structure he wanted for his company when he still only had ten employees, back in 1986. He replied:

> I wanted all my employees to feel the reactions of users, from the market. I wanted them to have direct contact with users, so I didn't want cells of more than thirty people. Now we have a number of products and all these sections are organised around less than thirty people, so all of them are in touch with users and the market.

This structure, together with encouraging all his employees to input reactions from users, and to develop ideas based on what they see in the market, engenders decision making at a very grass-roots level. Meetings are not cock pits in which everybody is fighting to get their idea on the drawing board, either. Problems which arise, or suggestions for improvements in products or practices, are expressed openly and then discussed.

*******

We can see that Matsuda-san has an authority to make decisions over and above other members of the company. This is because he is able to make decisions and implement them without discussion or consensus. This is regardless of whether the idea initially came from him or not. Nobody else in the company has this executive power. *Shoku seki sha* do not have power over and above *tantõsha* to make decisions. Decisions are made in weekly meetings, where everybody has equal say.[14] Within the remit of their job, *shoku seki sha* are invested with the responsibility to co-ordinate the work of others, but, as I have explained above, they do not have responsibility for the work of others. Responsibility for that lies with the individual. Shinkawa-san, told me: "Everybody is individually responsible", and this is reflected in the term *tantõsha*, which means 'person responsible'. Clark tells us that *tantõsha* is a term used to refer to a manager (1979: 109), indicating that the term is redefined

[14]Not every decision is subject to this process. Day-to-day decisions, or even quite important decisions are made on the hoof. This often involves a member of a work team informing the appropriate *shoku seki sha* of what course of action they have decided to take. Such decisions are not necessarily the result of consultation, either. It is in ways like this that responsibility resides in every individual employee. Responsibility is not simply, or even predominantly, a question of apportioning blame when something goes wrong, but is rather a matter of giving an individual the power to make decisions.

in the case of GA. In GA a *tantōsha* is a manager of their own work: they are responsible for the work they do.

If we compare Clark's (1979) description of responsibility and decision-making in the company he studied, we can see that there are fundamental divergences. Clark makes a distinction between 'symbolic' responsibility and 'real' responsibility:

> Japanese most frequently use the word responsibility to refer to symbolic assumption of guilt...The rules of this kind of responsibility are simple, for it comes automatically with high position. When something goes wrong the senior man or group of men presiding over the mistake will 'take responsibility' to lift blame from their subordinates. Symbolic responsibility, which for the individual is simply the price of status, has some value for the company community. It encourages a conscious mutual dependence of seniors and juniors. Those below know that those above will protect them. Those above must rely on their subordinates not to make mistakes that will lead to responsibility having to be taken (*Clark 1979: 126*).

It is immediately obvious that the structural relationship between employees at GA cannot support such a distribution of responsibility. Nobody takes responsibility for anybody else's mistakes, or takes credit for anybody else's successes, (see **3.5**), for responsibility for one's actions lies with the individual.

Clark then goes on to describe 'real' responsibility. He does so by looking at the decision-making process. He describes the *ringi* system, whereby a proposal is initiated in one department and circulates around the other departments, and up the echelons to the president. He notes that some authors argue that this shows that decisions are made at the lower levels, for if there is a degree of consensus, it cannot be ignored by the time the *ringi* reaches the top (Clark 1979: 126). Clark goes on to add that the extent to which the *ringi* can influence company policy is often severely restricted to minor decisions, such as where to put the new coffee machine, while major decisions get taken at senior management level. This accords with the description of the decision-making process described by Rohlen (1974), quoted above.

The situation at GA, then, is almost the opposite of that described by Rohlen (1974) and Clark (1979). In GA, leaving aside Matsuda-san having the power of absolute authority in special circumstances, authority lies with the work group and any other employees affected by the decision being taken, such as sales personnel, while responsibility lies with the individual. In the examples provided by Rohlen (1974) and Clark (1979), authority lies with individual managers, and responsibility lies with the group, although often expressed through the symbolic responsibility of a senior individual.

*******

### 3.4) Space and Time and the Reordering of Priorities

It is often possible to locate authority or gain insights into the decision-making process by studying the organisation of space in a particular company in Japan, and this is true for either Graphic Automation or GA Systems. On the understanding that authority is not invested in any one individual over another, other than Matsuda-san, the organisation of space in GA reflects this. The working space of both companies is open plan, except for the Meeting Room, which is a separate room used by both Graphic Automation and GA Systems. Graphic Automation is on one side of the meeting room and GA Systems is located on the other side. Both companies are joined by the meeting room, which is accessed from both sides, but dialogue between the two companies is either by e-mail or by leaving one of the offices and walking down the wide corridor which connects both companies with a comfortably furnished area where there are four elevators. Visitors to either company are directed to a small reception area which is the entrance to GA Systems. This is because most visitors are on business associated with either sales or administration. There is an entrance to Graphic Automation further down the corridor which is used solely by staff of either company. Upon entering the reception area, a partitioned space of approximately thirty square metres with racks advertising the company's products and a number of indoor plants, the visitor is confronted with a desk with a telephone and a list of departmental numbers, with instructions on what to do to contact the desired person. Matsuda-san is also contactable from this telephone. Having contacted a person using the telephone, that person then comes to the reception area to meet the visitor, who is then escorted to one of four cubicles which contain comfortable chairs and a low table. A meeting always begins with tea or coffee being offered to the visitor or visitors, but rather than a junior female member of staff appearing with the refreshments, the member of staff whom the visitors have come to see brings them. This is also true of Matsuda-san, who told me a delightful story about a prospective employee who had come for an interview, who was visibly shocked that Matsuda-san had brought him his tea, and who kept looking at the cup every time Matsuda-san picked up his tea and began drinking, not knowing whether to drink it or not.

Matsuda-san has a separate office, located behind the meeting room, which is also accessed from either the GA Systems side or the Graphic Automation side. Apart from Matsuda-san being separated from the rest of the employees in this manner, indicating his authority over the rest of the staff, the organisation of space in the rest of the working areas does not reflect any distribution of power, other than that the distribution of power is equal. The working space in both companies is divided according to work teams in Graphic Automation, and by departments in GA Systems: one for administration, one for sales, and one for branch sales, which are separated by low partitions which do not restrict the field of vision when standing up. The organisation of space within the departments is solely on a division of labour basis and not by authority. Each department is separated into development, after-sales back-up and testing, with the *shokusekisha* sitting randomly

amongst the rest of the work team, the *tantõsha*.

The organisation of space at GA deliberately disrupts conceptions of how space is organised in the workplace. It is very common, maybe even universal throughout Japan, that the organisation of space reflects the organisation of power within the workplace. When I worked at Kodansha's *Morning* editorial office, the atmosphere was very relaxed. Everybody dressed with their own style, some in T-shirts and faded jeans, others in brightly coloured waistcoats and bow-ties. Others looked like preppy Ivy Leaguers, one or two like cleaned-up Hell's Angels. Everybody except the editor, that is the direct link with the rest of Kodansha, who wore a white shirt and tie, and a suit. Everybody worked hard, there was no question about that, and many of Kodansha's brightest, idiosyncratic, employees worked there. *Morning* is the most popular, and most successful 20s-30s *manga* (comic) with quite a progressive editorial policy, and everybody was very professional. Nevertheless, the impression of a rather liberal working environment greeted the visitor, whether myself, initially, the man who came to fix the photo-copier (I sat next to it - we got to know each other), or somebody from another Kodansha department. But authority was constantly visible through the arrangement of space in the editorial office. Senior staff, in whatever section, were closest to the editor's desk, with subordinates radiating outwards towards the corner of the office, with my desk closest to the door, near the photocopiers, and furthest away from the editor. At GA, there had been a deliberate rearranging of space to remove the possibility of the organisation of space being identified with a discarded organisation of power.

*******

The organisation of time in the lives of GA employees also indicates a reordering of priorities. Responsibility for work rests with individual selves, and, as will become apparent in the following chapter, accompanying this shift of responsibility onto individual selves, both for their work and for generating ideas, comes respect for individual privacy in the form of respect for an individuals time and space. This is very much in line with the debates surrounding the quality of life of Japanese employees I mentioned in 2.4, which complements the desire of companies to limit their responsibilities towards their employees on the basis of a desire to reduce costs.

At GA, all employees jealously guard their own time, which runs from 5:00pm until 9:00 am. The responsibility to carry out their work assignments requires them, on occasion, to arrive at work early or stay late, but in both cases it is a personal decision as part of a personally organised work schedule.[15] During the time I was there, occasions arose when individuals would stay behind to help a colleague with a particular task, but the culture of staying behind in support of colleagues, simply staying in the office, as described by Rohlen (1974) and Miyamoto (1993) does not occur. Likewise, nobody goes drinking with each other on a work team basis. In the interview I conducted, I asked two questions relating to work obligations outside working hours. These were, (1): Do you have any obligations or commitments outside working hours, such as going drinking with

[15]Work assignments are left to the individual to organise and undertake. As I indicated in 3.2, employees are encouraged to spend a part of their working day doing things for their own personal development, such as training or thinking about ways to improve or develop company products.

colleagues?,[16] and (2); What about weekends?[17] In both cases the answer was an emphatic 'No'. In response to the question 'Why?' Wada-san replied: "Well, it happens sometimes, with friends, but there is no feeling of obligation to go. Nobody here wants that. I prefer to go home and be with my family". Shinkawa-san told me: "I'm an individual. Work and private are completely separated with this company (*kanzen ni kiriwaketeiru*). Within my private life outside work, there is absolutely no trace of work (*puraibeeto no sekai ni shigoto wo mochikomu koto wa mattaku arimasen*). Iwata-san mentioned that there are things organised on a company basis, but that there is no obligation to go:

> Office or work-related things, such as drinking after work, no. Although there are things we do together as a company occasionally, such as cherry blossom viewing, but we have complete freedom to decide whether or not to go, and there are no rules stating we have to go, or feelings that we should.

Hinata-san answered with nothing more than an emphatic 'No'. 'Never?' I asked. 'No never' he replied. Muroya-san said that nobody had to do anything outside work, unless it involved a tight deadline: "After work and weekends are essentially private, although if there was work to do, I would certainly come in and work". He added that such a situation had never arisen, though. Yamazaki-san replied: "We don't have the kind of setup, as in ordinary companies, such as punching time cards, staying late, and having to go drinking. We basically work whenever we like and after that we can do what we like". This is very different from what Rohlen describes:

> To the...observer accustomed to the homeward rush of employees at quitting time, these office meetings and parties which last long into the night at first seem profoundly exotic and inexplicable...[T]here is no set time when work ends, no time clock, and a reluctance to leave before the rest. Staying late is a common quality of office work. In some instances, the whole office will stay until the last person is finished. This remarkable degree of cohesion is best understood through an examination of the main facets of... office groups (*Rohlen 1974: 100*).

What Rohlen refers to as cohesion is as much coercion. Miyamoto (1993) provides a number of accounts of working late at the office in the Ministry of Health and Welfare, which accurately reflects many opinions I have heard regarding staying late in support of colleagues. Many of the responses to my questions regarding working late and drinking with colleagues, were noticeably peppered with emphatic words, indicating the strong feelings the employees at GA have about guarding their private time. Indeed, Rohlen goes on to explain, in structural terms, why the practices and codes of conduct he describes exist. He describes how work groups are placed in competition with each other, which forces members of a work group together and generates a cliquishness within and even hostility between work groups. In Rohlen's example, the 'formal' structure is then reinforced by the development of 'informal' *habatsu*, which Matsuda-san regards as so inefficient (3.1), which force all members to stay. Miyamoto's (1993) contempt for such a system flows off the page. Nakane (1970) also supports Rohlen's (1974) analysis and Miyamoto's (1993) account. Work teams at GA are not placed in competition with each other and rewards are not based on group achievement. As will be demonstrated in the next section, motivation is not generated by the accruing of status within the work team and company, but by fundamentally different goals, with rewards being contingent on both work team performance and individual performance.

---

[16] *Shigoto wo owatte kara shigoto ni kan suru ginu ga arimasuka. Tatoiieba izakaya de osake wo nondari suru koto toka*
[17] *Shuumatsu wa?*

So, the organisation of both time and space in GA encourages a work place in which hierarchy has been radically diminished, ideas and information flow freely up and down the command structure and horizontally between any member of the company, and where both respect for, and the development of individual selves, is regarded as ethically and commercially paramount. In the next section I describe how these ideals, enshrined in ideas about what an employee should be, and how employees should work together, is supported and encouraged by the reward structure.

### 3.4) Motivations and Rewards

If success is directly measured by satisfying customers, then we can say that motivational goals are primarily directed outside the company, towards satisfying the customer, as all reward is governed by this criterion. This is the case at GA, were we can see that success is not contingent on relative positions between employees within the company, but by an employee's relationship with the company's customers, through performance. Achievement and success is contingent on customer satisfaction (CS). Along with financial remuneration, status and respect are motivational goals in GA, but the fact that the motivation for achieving status and respect does not derive from the relative differences between staff levels within the company, is a fundamental difference from how motivational goals are constructed in companies like those studied by Rohlen (1974), Clark (1979), and which are generically identifiable with Nakane's (1970) analysis.

Motivation at GA begins with the Graphic Automation employee being encouraged to develop their own talents in order to make their own product. This is Matsuda-san's stated goal, with regard to his employees. To GA Systems staff, he says:

> Administration is not the company's work or product. The object of the company is customer satisfaction. All activity in my company is decided from that position - customer satisfaction. But in a large company, administration is a very big primary objective and customer satisfaction is secondary. At first, customer satisfaction is most important, but when the structure gets big, administration becomes most important. Also in my company, the people in administration want to administrate everything, but I always stop them and tell them that customer satisfaction and giving people the space to develop their talents is most important. As small administration as possible, as little control as possible.

Developing one's individuality and nurturing one's originality of thought are the requirements to achieve the goal of developing successful products and meeting customer's needs, and consequently a lot of time is given to encouraging the development of these characteristics. As I explained in 3.2, everybody is expected to spend a part of their working day on themselves alone, either studying or reflecting on how they can develop themselves as individuals, with the company's goals in mind.[18] Among new members, it is the job of managers to coax and cajole the new employees along this road. The manner in which Iwata-san was instructed to "look for a new consciousness in myself and study those necessary things (*jibun de nan ka shigoto ni tsuite atarashii chiishiki wo motometa toki ni wa jibun kara hitsuyō na mono wo benkyō shiteite*)", points to the importance attached to the development of motivational goals inside the employee, as well as outside the company. This is in contrast to what Rohlen tells us: "Competition within the age group is the crucial measure of a man" (Rohlen 1974: 143). It is the individual employee's task to attain these goals in either case, but the difference lies in where the motivations lie. Because success is not measured by difference between employees

[18]What constitutes an 'individual' and 'individuality', both in the context of GA, in Japan, and as represented in theories of the individual, is discussed in the following chapter.

at GA, goals are fundamentally different, and therefore motivation is sought in different areas, and are in marked opposition to the motivational goals and reward structure described by Nakane (1970), Rohlen (1974), Clark (1979), Kondo (1990) and Hamada (1992). I quote from Rohlen:

> [T]he entire list of payments and benefits ignores the reward that [the] men prize above all...the status and distinction that only rank can provide...Issues of motivation...must be discussed primarily in terms of the Japanese white-collar worker's ambition for high rank: he pays most attention to promotion, not to the wage system (Rohlen 1974: 175).

Achieving the rank of *buchō* by the age of forty, say, is not a sign of achievement or success in GA, consequently, attaining rank is only a motivational goal for those who choose to be managers. Even then, how that success is measured is very subjective, because age and rank, or length of service and rank are not linked. In addition, the decision to become a manager is a personal decision, which not everybody chooses to take. Consequently, because rank is not universal throughout the company, it cannot be used as a means of measuring status, reward, or success, objectively. The only example whereby rank and status are universally acknowledged throughout the company, is in the case of Matsuda-san, whereby everybody calls Matsuda-san *shachō* and acknowledges a difference in status. Even, then, however, Matsuda-san's relationship with the other employees is fundamentally different from other examples where status is derived from relative difference in rank. Expressed through the command structure, and his structural relationship with the rest of the staff, all of whom have equal access to him, Matsuda-san's relationship with the rest of the employees, both *shoku seki sha* and *tantōsha* is not easily comparable to other examples (Abegglen 1958; Rohlen 1974; Clark 1979; Kondo 1990; Hamada 1992).

If, with the exception of Matsuda-san, rank cannot be used as an indicator of status in GA, is status accrued in GA at all? Matsuda-san stated unequivocally that: "*shoku seki sha* are not above *tantōsha* in any sense", and that if an employee has no talent for management: "they remain equal (*taitō*)". This fact is backed up by all accounts I collected from other employees, whether they are *tantōsha*, *shoku seki sha*, men or women. Hamada suggests that status is accrued through financial differences, but overridden by status derived by rank combined with position within the *keiretsu*, for example, head office or subsidiary (Hamada 1992: 159). I could not detect this, myself.

Status is closely tied to respect, and what constitutes respect is very much bound up with the ideals of what constitutes the ideal GA employee, which, as I have explained, revolves around personal development centred on nurturing individuality and creativity. It also results from a job well done, which although stemming from ideas about the ideal employee, is also recognised by colleagues directly, just as being sloppy and unconscientious leads to a lack of respect. Status is also accrued through those *kyōtsuu suru bubun*, 'those things which are common to all', which are not exclusive to GA. For example, age is accorded a degree of respect, but this is attenuated in GA because age is not linked to authority or responsibility. Status is also accrued through what Moeran refers to as 'cultural elitism' (Moeran 1989: 48), but again, this is status accrued outside the workplace and not contingent on it. The use of first names in many cases, and names in general, over and above titles, also indicates that status is not tied to rank, position, or gender. Not only does the tactical use of titles and names suggest that status is not accrued through the creation of difference within the company, the tactical use of language also does not indicate status. The tactical

use of language, instead indicates *equality*, rather than degrees of familiarity even. Again, the exception to this is Matsuda-san, although in relaxed settings, such as English lessons, very informal language is used, with joking not uncommon between Matsuda-san and the other employees present.

As a general rule within the company, rank is not a reward for achievement, as not everybody chooses to pursue a management position. In cases where an employee has chosen to become a manager, movement from *kachō* to *jichō* to *buchō* does indicate reward for dispatching one's duties competently, although such a move is not totally contingent on this. More important is the employee's wishes. Of course, they have to be competent, but it has to be remembered that rank is about the nature of the work itself. Changing rank involves a change in the content of the work. This is another reason why Matsuda-san only promotes those who wish to be promoted, as long as they are competent. It is a sign of his respect for his employees that he gives them the opportunity to make their own life choices, and he knows that many are software engineers because they love the work, not management, however talented as engineers they might be. Not all *kachō* want to be *jichō* or *buchō*, for the same reasons that not all *tantōsha* want to be *shoku seki sha* in the first place. Also, moving up in rank is not a matter of promotion in a strict sense because all employees are regarded as equal, and implicit in the idea of promotion is the recognition that there are levels within a company. Wada-san, the prodigy who at eighteen managed to do what one of Japan's largest software houses couldn't (**3.2**), is a *kachō*. He has no intention of assuming more administrative duties:

> Looking at it objectively, it's a waste of resources. I'm a software engineer, and as a *kachō* I can utilise my abilities to the full. If I aspire to become a *buchō*, I would be diverted from what I currently do, because I would have other responsibilities, and somebody else would have to take over my work. There is nobody able to do that, and I happen to enjoy my work.

Motivation comes in another form as well. As I noted in **2.4** more and more people look to achieve personal satisfaction outside the workplace, as they begin to place more importance on leisure, a sign of a complementary 'bottom-up' process of emerging individualism (**5.2**, **5.4**). Consequently, motivational goals are already shifting away from the workplace, and it is in this way that respect for the individual and a strict separation between work and private acts as a motivation to work at GA.

Reward comes almost exclusively in terms of financial remuneration. Everybody in GA and GA Systems is on an age-related salary. Up to the age of thirty, all men and women earn the same basic salary, which is supplemented by a family allowance (*kazokukyuu*) if the employee is married: male or female. When an employee marries, or if a married person joins the company, they receive a family allowance. On the basis of these two parts of a GA salary, all staff, regardless of rank, performance, gender, or department, receive the same income up to the age of thirty. After the age of thirty, salaries begin to include a performance-based increment. For an employee over thirty, the basic salary (*kihonkyuu*) makes up, on average, 70% of a salary. How employees are rewarded for their performance depends on whether they are *shoku seki sha*, or *tantōsha*, and whether they are a salesperson in GA Systems, or a member of Graphic Automation, the development company. *Shoku*

*seki sha* receive more than *tantõsha* in recognition that being a manager involves more work and more responsibility. A *buchõ* receives approximately 20% more than a *tantõsha* of the same age. Salesmen can potentially earn more through bonuses received from high sales, but salesmen are also subject to fines (*bakkin*) if they do not hit their sales targets. There are no discriminations or differences in rewards on a gender basis. One of the highest earners in GA group is a female salesperson based in Sapporo, and there is a female *kachõ* in Graphic Automation. Inoue-san told me: "Ability decides, rather than whether a person is a man or a woman. There is no sexual discrimination (*shigoto wa nõryoku de kimatte sabetsu de wa nai desu*)". Ozawa-san: "There is no discrimination here at work. There are no obstacles for women to rise through the company. Outside GA there is, but not here".

In Graphic Automation, performance targets for the department are first put forward by Matsuda-san, and then agreed by the work team in question as a whole. Performance targets for sections are also set in the same manner. Such levels are not a foregone conclusion, with adjustments being made during meetings. In GA Systems, sales targets are set by branch managers in consultation with their staff, in the same way as the work teams in Graphic Automation. The reason why Matsuda-san is involved in setting performance targets for Graphic Automation, but leaves the setting of sales targets to the departments is, as he explained before: "Because I'm an engineer, not a salesman".

Length of service is rewarded by many companies, but is not recognised in any way, nor rewarded in any way, at GA. Even though GA was only founded fourteen years ago, it is very obvious that length of service is not rewarded, or recognised, most of the time. Ability to do the job and suitability for the job are rewarded, with age being supplemented as it is accepted that age brings family responsibilities which incur a financial burden.[19] Hashimoto-san joined the company as a *buchõ*, and a number of other *shoku seki sha* have only been with the company for a few years, indicating that employees are not simply promoted from within. Matsubara-san has been with Graphic Automation for three years and has already expressed an interest in management. I asked her how she approached Matsuda-san:

> I began as a tester, which I still am, but I am naturally an organised person, and see quality control as not simply the final stage of a process but something which can productively benefit product development. Those in quality control are the first to notice consistent errors, and therefore there needs to be liaison between quality control, the final stage of the production process, and design and development, the first stages of the process. I just see things in their overall context, and feel that I can develop my skills and satisfy my natural curiosity by connecting quality control with development. That is basically what I said to *shachõ*.

I then asked her what his reply was. "He agreed" she answered.

Not only is length of service not rewarded, but 'lifetime employees (*sei sha in*)' are not privileged over fixed-term contract employees. Matsuda-san explained the system at GA:

> Employees have a choice, whether they want a *sei sha in* contract or a *keiyaku sha in* contract. They choose to do that because contract employees' income is a little higher

[19]Matsuda san sees no end to age being remunerated, rather than being rewarded. The cost of raising a family, particularly as the children grow older and educational costs mount, require that age be remunerated, rather than a respect for age itself.

> on a monthly basis. They don't get retirement payments, but they can make alternative plans. Private pension schemes are only just beginning in Japan, but they will grow in the coming years as the financial industry deregulates and companies look to reduce their financial burden. Employees also do this because they expect to change their job. It depends on the case, whether or not this is to the advantage of the company. Sometimes it is better to employ people on a short term basis. On the whole, I prefer to hire them permanently but this will change, I know. The circumstances in the business environment can change very quickly, so it is sometimes better to have employees on short term renewable contracts. For example, at the moment, we are developing CAD systems for mechanical engineering, but in five years time, we may enter another area and reduce the mechanical engineering element. In such a situation, having employees on lifetime contracts is not suitable. More and more companies are moving over to yearly renewable contracts, which are, on average 20% higher, in terms of salary, than *sei sha in*.

At the present time, twenty people have a fixed term contract, and are referred to as *keiyaku sha in*. *Keiyaku sha in* are not discriminated against in any way. So far, no *keiyaku sha in* are *shoku seki sha*, but no conclusions can be drawn from this. *Keiyaku sha in* are remunerated in exactly the same way as *sei sha in*, except their basic salary is higher.

I asked Matsuda-san if he feels that his *keiyaku sha in*, and fixed term contract employees in general are less motivated and less loyal.

> Mmm. I don't think so. Loyalty, in my experience, comes from being motivated properly and rewarded properly. Company spirit (*kaisha seishin*) is less in big companies that have lifetime employment, particularly now. Also, young people who want to change jobs are criticised for just wanting to have fun. They do want to have fun, I'm sure, but there is another reason, I think. The big companies, who everybody wanted to work for up until a few years ago, are not growing anymore. These companies cannot offer the opportunity for career development, or for improving skills, so many young people move companies for this reason. Employees in established companies think the same. More and more people do not intend to stay with the same company. They want to join small, rapidly growing companies, or start their own company. I'd say 50% of the employees in large companies now, or people who want to join a large company, do not intend to stay with the company. Technology and markets are developing very quickly, companies will increasingly hire people with special skills. When a company needs a particular skill, they will hire that person, and pay them a higher salary. That will be balanced by not having to pay pensions or retirement payments.

Matsuda-san tells us that loyalty derives from persons being 'motivated properly and rewarded properly'. The basis of motivation and reward in GA is acknowledgment of and respect for the individual. The individual is rewarded for his or her work, and given responsibility for it. The individual's time is respected, both inside and outside the company. When inside, the individual is expected to devise their own work schedule and liaise with whoever it is necessary. When outside, the company does not enquire into the life of the employee, not does it seek to control it or administer it in any way. Unlike Okumura's diagnosis of the major problem associated with corporate capitalism: that corporations totally ignore employee's personal circumstances (**2.4**), GA respects the employee's personal circumstances. Also, in line with the shift from a society which places work above leisure, to a society which places leisure above work, GA has restored the balance between company, family and society, a balance which Kaneko argues: "the company-centred life-style...threatens" (Kaneko 1997: 154) (**2.4**). As employee's goal's shift, so must the manner in which

companies motivate and reward people.

Employer's goals are also shifting, however, and complement the trend among employee's, and in society generally. Companies are aware of a need to harness the individuality which their employees are beginning to display, in order to develop new technologies and new products (5.1). At the same time, they are looking to reduce their labour costs and are therefore also keen to reduce their role in the lives of their employees (5.2). As Matsuda-san corroborates, employees are seeking to improve their skills and maximize their opportunities as the flexible economy begins to grow (5.2). Again, this suits many employers as they begin to adopt an 'employment portfolio' system of the kind described by Kaneko (2.3). Among young companies, such as GA, and among young employees in established companies, the new developments are eagerly awaited and embraced. Problems arise when it is not in the interests of those employees who have already invested much of their working lives in the old ways, to embrace the new ethics and practices. Because of this, the pace of change is slow, and many workplaces are in a state of confusion and low morale, with both young and old unhappy with the current state of affairs. Matsuda-san alludes to this in the passage I quoted above, when he mentions that 'company spirit (*kaisha seishin*)' is low in large companies.

We can see that GA has adopted all of the points mentioned by Okumura (1992), Morita (1992), and Kaneko (1997), in order to redress the balance between company, family, and society, which has shifted noticeably since the mid 1980's. This is both economically and ethically driven. Arguably the most fundamental change, however, is not to working practices and ethics *per se*, but to the effect that these changes are having, and will continue to have, on personhood and ideas about the self, both individual and collective. In the next section, I begin to look at how work ethics and practices impact upon the self, through the recognition that individual selves have individual needs, desires, and strengths, which can be used more productively if recognised individually, rewarded individually, and motivated individually. What the shift from a 'company-centred' society to a 'people-centred' society ultimately entails, is the legitimation and institutionalisation of 'individuality (*kosei*)'.

*******

### 3.6) Company as a Collectivity of Individual Selves

The development of the Japanese company since the beginning of the Meiji era (1868-1912) until the present day, is a story of 'changing with the times'.[20] Because of this, I believe it is reasonable to talk of the development of the Japanese company in evolutionary terms. Even talking of *a* Japanese company, as if all Japanese companies are the same, invites criticism. But a combination of social, technological, and statutory developments, which have affected all companies, does allow for the analytical use of the idea of 'the Japanese company' within the terms of this discussion. Kondo, as part of her analysis contesting the uniformity and univocality of the idiom 'company as family', provides an historical overview of the development of the Japanese company as a family, both structurally and ideologically, as an introduction to her consideration of the contested meanings of 'company as family':

> [T]he *ie* and *uchi* are still resonant idioms...Moreover, it is during the postwar period that the metaphor of 'company as family' is most resonant in large firms, for it is at this point when the 'Japanese employment system'...becomes a social reality...Moreover, the *ie* provides a ready template for social groupings in general. It pivots around a hierarchical structure of power and authority...it links this belonging to task performance...A company, a school, a state can all be potentially seen as originations that require of their members acknowledgment of authority, feelings of belonging, and meritorious work...Like the *ie*, the Sato company was an organised, hierarchically structured entity which involves many aspects of its employees lives. It provides an internally differentiated structure of power and authority, and it serves as a circle of emotional attachment and a nodal point of identity (*Kondo 1990: 174*).

Structure and ideology are familiar tools used to apprehend social reality, but they are, analytically, distinctly separate from the being, doing subject. In the next chapter I will look at the way structure and ideas both create individuals and are created by individuals. In this section, in order to demonstrate both the continuity and difference between 'company as family', and 'company as a collectivity of individual selves', I will look at GA through the words of the employees. In this way structure and philosophy emerge intact, together and unseparated by heuristic licence. As people describe and explain, they construct a framework, a structure, using words and ideas (Cohen 1994; 1995). In GA, frameworks are built on a vocabulary of an emerging individuality, not separate or opposed to situational collective selves but in a flux, a dynamic relationship with other individual selves. There is little of the dichotomy, or opposition between individual self and collective selves, as if the two are generically different (**4.3**).

Kondo tells us that the metaphor of the *ie* to describe Japanese companies draws on their hierarchical structure of power and authority within which work is grounded in feelings of belonging and emotional warmth (Kondo 1990: 174). Nakane similarly draws our attention to the manner in which emotional attachment is encouraged and generated in order to provide cohesion and an environment for selfless work (Nakane 1970: 8). Okumura (1992) and before that, Rohlen (1974), both see the 'company as family' motif mobilised to create a sense of debt and obligation among a workforce to past and future members of the organisation. The instilling of such a sense of

[20] See also Taira (1970), Hamada (1980), Clark (1979), Itoh (1992, 1994, 1996).

obligation and belonging is just one example of how emotional attachments are fostered and harnessed in the pursuit of profits. Kondo also draws our attention to the mobilisation of 'company as family' behind the pursuit of efficiency and productivity (Kondo 1990: 177). In these examples, and all cases where 'company as family' is mobilised in some form or other in workplaces in Japan, there is a direct relationship with the organisational structure of a given workplace. Having said that, Kondo, following Bachnik (1983) locates the ease with which *ie* ideology is transferable to companies in the fact that: "the *ie* is basically an enterprise/work organisation rather than a unit of kinship [so] the *ie* and the company can act as templates for each other" (Kondo 1990: 176). Yet I don't think it would be possible for GA to have the structure it has, and at the same time mobilise the idea of 'company as family'. This is not to suggest that the kinds of changes to industrial structure and philosophy which are being advocated automatically preclude the use of 'company as family', for it is reasonable to imagine the existence of companies in the future where ideals of 'company as family' and 'company as a collectivity of individual selves' are mobilised together.

In the case of Graphic Automation and GA Systems, however, individuality and individuals dominate the idiomatic language of the company and, as I have already demonstrated, are engendered by the organisational structure and command structure of the company (3.3). In GA, the category of the individual is given a primacy over and above any other possible category of persons, such as families, or even *kaisha*, the company. The strict separation between work and private is very evident. In 3.4 I described how the deployment of both time and space supports a collectivity of individual selves, who are regarded as equal. Not only does the organisation of time and space within the company support such ideals and practices, the location of GA in the larger temporal and spatial worlds of the employees also privileges the individual, and it is in the time and space outside the company that we find the family. Answers to my questions regarding company activities and obligations outside working hours, drew unanimously emphatic responses. My discussions with the employees about privacy all included a separation between work and everything else. Hinata-san describes vividly, not only the separation between work and private which characterises GA, but also the separation between company and family in the minds of the employees: "For me privacy is not broadcasting the intimate details of my family life. The company does not expect this of me, and in return, I do not expect anything special from the company. Family is family, company is my place of work. I want this partition to be clear (*kono kugiri wo watashi wa hakkiri shitai to iu*)". Kondo tells us:

> The company also serves as a surrogate family in its involvement with important personal events in their employee's lives. The Satos, for instance, kept a list of people's birthdays, including those of the part-time workers, and when the auspicious day arrived Mr. Sato would present the birthday boy or girl with a gift...Gifts were much more lavish if the employee happened to come of age...Marriage was an especially important occasion for company involvement...and it...extend[s] a consoling hand to employees and their families even in death...From the recruitment process through death, then, the Sato company touches the lives of its members (*Kondo 1979:180*).

Kondo goes on to tell of company involvement in the employee's lives through company outings too. But everybody is obliged to go, unlike GA. Iwata-san told us that occasionally there are company organised events, but that there is strictly no obligation to go, and nobody is criticised or ostracised for not going. The company pays for small groups who organise trips, such as *O hanami* (cherry blossom viewing), themselves. Overall, we can see that the level of involvement of the company in the employee's lives at GA is much less than in the example provided by Kondo, or

Rohlen (1974), and that discourses of the family stay firmly and distinctly outside the company.

The company isn't simply less involved, it is differently involved. The organisational structure of GA does not foreground the work team or the office group, or the section, or the department, as the primary social entity. It foregrounds the individual. Yamada-san described the situation:

> With this company, rather than doing things as groups (*shuudan de*) work is achieved through the abilities of individuals working together (*kojin kojin no nõryoku ni õjite shigoto suru to iu yarikata*). There is not really a groupism feeling here (*shuudan shugi to iu kanji de wa nai*). If you look at the work we are able to do in this kind of working environment we have here, things have certainly changed, I think.

GA is not an enclave of individuals surrounded by a nation of groups. To begin with, we have to understand just what is meant by 'an individual' is in these situations, and just what 'group' we are talking about, remembering all the time that the two constitute each other and are always one. This is dealt with in the next chapter, but I would like to finish this chapter and arrive at a point where those discussions can begin, by demonstrating, in the words of some of the employees, how they feel the individuality (*kosei*) they have had awakened in them, and are awakening in each other, fits into the other parts of their lives. What are the continuities between how they think and act at work, and how they think and act when they are in other settings? We can see from the events and debates which I have described in the previous chapters, that GA and the employees are in the middle of an evolving individualism which encompasses the whole country to lesser or greater extents, one which is developing as a consequence of processes of change within and outside the country, and at the same time being encouraged from within. Also, in GA, even though the expression of individuality is encouraged, its dynamic relationship with the collectivity creates new constraints synchronically with the new freedoms. As Shinkawa-san remarked:

> If you compare this company to others, there are some conservative things about it, although I don't think there is much that is traditional here. If you look at the company from the outside, it seems to be quite progressive and restructured. But when you enter, it is a bit disorganised, and quite conservative too (*shagai kara miteiru to, wari to kakushiinteki to iu toka shinpoteki ni mieru kedo, jissai ni naka ni haitteiru to mou chotto dorokusai to iu ka, kekkõ hoshuuteki na tokoro to omoimasu*).

Matsubara-san explained this as follows:

> In Japan, when you try and do something on your own, more often than not it will be regarded as bad. However, when you try and do something different at GA, we are encouraged to be individual (*kojin wo dashita hõ ga ii to iwareru*), so there are times when it is regarded as a very good thing. But there are also times when it is regarded as not so good. For example, we have to follow the company's regulations, but at the same time we are encouraged to develop our individual abilities in our work (*shigoto wa kojin no nõryoku wo sugoku noshi nasai*).

Adapting to changing situations is what selves do. It is an intrinsic part of being-in-the-world. Negotiating different settings within GA, such as consciously developing your individuality while at the same time following the company's rules, requires the same faculties as moving from GA to a family wedding. Both begin with learning to negotiate new settings and both involve the constant

negotiation of different settings. Neither of which are straightforward, and both are fraught with potential failure, albeit minor and fleeting in most cases. In addition to being taught, this is how we learn. Matsubara-san indicates this when she says:

> Outside work, we should restrain our individualistic tendencies (*kojin wo narubeku osaeru*). Over the years, social conventions (*kimatteiru shakai no kimari*) have developed, and one of them is that people should constrain their individualistic impulses. However, at GA we are encouraged to use our individual abilities when working or when expressing our opinions. But to be asked to discard a way of thinking which has been round for a long time is sometimes difficult.

Having said that, however, Matsubara-san makes a telling remark when she adds: "At GA, I do not have to adjust, especially, I'm able to be myself (*kaisha de wa toku ni adujyasuto suru koto de wa nai. Watashi ga watashi wo motte ireba watashi no tadashii to omou koto wo dekiru kaisha da to omoimasu*)".[21]

GA cannot be separated from its context. It exists and flourishes *in* Japan, *in* the world. The fact that it is able to flourish tells us something about what is happening outside the plush offices of GA. Iwata-san makes this clear:

> Japanese have a group consciousness. Thinking individually is weak here. Certainly people here think individually, but I personally don't think that makes people individuals. Nevertheless, things are changing, especially among young people. If this was the old days, we'd be expected to work for only one company. Consequently a person is affiliated (*shozoku suru*) to a company group (*kaisha to iu dantai*). Until recently, within a company, even if your opinion was different from everybody else, there was a company way of thinking and doing, and you followed it. Now, increasingly, relatively speaking, you can speak your mind frankly. You don't hear the expression 'Go with the flow (*shuudan no nagare ni nagasareru*)' so often these days.

*******

[21] I translated Matsubara san's comment: "*watashi no tadashii to omou koto wo dekiru kaisha da to omoimasu*", as: "In this company, I am able to be myself". Literally, what she said was: "I am able to do the things I think are right, in this company".

## Conclusion

I opened this chapter by documenting methodology. I then began to look in detail at the changes in attitudes to work, changes to ethics and working practices, and changes to the relationships between employees in the workplace. Matsuda san's reason's for leaving Tõshiba : that he was unable to use his initiative and develop his own products, are the base of his own business philosophy at GA. The organisational structure and command structure at GA are geared to maximize customer satisfaction (CS), which is achieved as a result of all the employees having direct access to the market, in other words, the company's customers and potential customers. Customer satisfaction is best achieved, according to Matsuda-san, if the employees are not simply encouraged, but are required, through company philosophy, ethics and practice, to display originality (*originarity*). This is achieved by the employees expressing their individuality (*kosei*). In order that the employees are able to express their individuality, the organisational structure and command structure at GA is very different from a rigid, hierarchically structured company of the kind described by Nakane (1970), Rohlen (1974), Clark (1979), Kondo (1990), Hamada (1992), and Hendry (1993).

The most immediately obvious aspect of this radical restructuring, is that everybody is regarded as equal (*taitõ*). Matsuda-san, the president, is the only member of staff referred to by his title, and he does have executive powers over the rest of the staff, but there are many occasions during the working day when it is very difficult to tell him apart from the other employees. Everybody in the company is in touch with everybody else, and everybody has access to everybody else. This is very different from what is normally found in a Japanese workplace, where who an employee can talk to, together with what they can say to a given person, is strictly prescribed by the organisational structure and command structure. Matsuda-san regards this rigid structure as slow and inefficient, particularly because it does not give all the employees the opportunity to show initiative, or to have access to the company's customers. Instead, as Matsuda-san explained, corroborating Rohlen (1974), such a structure engenders a system where the prime concern of the employees is not to satisfy the customers, but to increase their status within the organisation. Certainly, this is contingent on satisfying customers, but the fact that an employee's main focus of attention is on his status relative to his colleagues, means such an organisation is not as effective as it could be. In 5.1 I will take up this point again.

Being 'equal (*taitõ*)' means that everybody has equal access to each other, and has equal say in contributing to the development of the company's products, and to the company generally. There is a layer of management, comprised of the three standard ranks found in virtually all Japanese companies. These are the ranks of 'department head (*buchõ*)', 'assistant department head (*jichõ*)', and 'section head (*kachõ*)'. These 'managers' are known as *shokusekisha*, rather than *kanrisha*, the more common term. Managers are not called *kanrisha* at GA because *kanri* indicates a degree of control over others, and this is not the function of a manager at GA. *Shokusekisha* co-ordinate the work of

others, but do not take responsibility for the work of others. This is a radical departure from form. At GA, everybody is responsible for their own work, taking the can if things go wrong, and taking the laurels when they go well. Taking responsibility at GA is not primarily a case of taking the blame when things go wrong, or of taking credit when due. Giving individual employees responsibility for their work is more a question of giving an individual the power to make decisions.

There is no status attached to rank at GA, except in the case of Matsuda-san, the president. Rank indicates the job a person does. It indicates his or her duties and responsibilities. Also, status cannot be accrued through rank because becoming a manager is a personal decision: not everybody wants to be a manager, and consequently some people, regardless of their age or ability, remain *tantõsha*, 'ordinary employees'. Clark (1979) tells us that the word *tantõsha* is used to mean manager, and this is the meaning assigned to the word *tantõsha* at GA: a *tantõsha*, an ordinary employee, is a manager of their own work, responsible for their own work.

The ordering of space and time at GA reflects the equality among the employees. Very often in a Japanese company, the organisation of space closely reflects the distribution of power among the persons inhabiting that space. At GA this is also true. Matsuda-san has his own office, but otherwise, *tantõsha* and *shokusekisha* are randomly spread within their work team areas. The ordering of time reflects the fact that the company has very little to do with an individual employee once they have completed their work. Continuing the theme from the last chapter, GA is a good example of a company which embodies the relationship between a person's workplace and other aspects of their life, in what is envisaged as a 'people-centred' society (**2.4**). The workplace is completely separated from the rest of an employee's life. Employees can and do meet each other socially outside working hours, but this is not expected, or regarded as an essential part of developing workplace relationships, in a manner described by Nakane (1970), Rohlen (1974) and Kondo (1990). The employees at GA, on the contrary, tend not to see each other socially. Neither do they regard a lessening involvement by the company in their lives as a retrogressive step. They emphatically stated their preference for a strict separation of the workplace from their 'private' lives, consistent with the trend of placing leisure above work. In keeping with this trend, motivation is derived from the fact that the company respects the employees' private lives. This is also reflected in the absence of any discourses of 'company as family', a major ideological and ethical development in the post-WWII period. Discourses of the workplace and of the family are separate, with the primary discourse of the workplace being a discourse of individuality and of 'individuals working together' rather than 'in groups (*shuudan de*)'.

*******

# 4. A New Individualism

## 1) Rehabilitating the Individual: 1
## 2) Rehabilitating the Individual: 2
## 3) Individuality and Community
## 4) *Seken* and The New Individualism
## 5) *Tatemae*, *Giri* and The New Individualism

In the previous chapter, I described how, in GA, the individual is given a primacy over other categories of persons, such as 'family', or 'group (*shuudan, dantai*)', and where the individual becomes a locus of responsibility and a springboard for originality. In this chapter I begin to look at how a privileging of individual selves and the foregrounding of individuality (*kosei*) redefines the individual self through relationships between individual selves, and through the relationship between individual selves and collective selves within GA.

The chapter begins by challenging recent studies on the Japanese self, particularly on the grounds of their refusal to talk about selves as 'individuals'. This refusal is grounded in the fallacy that all traces of individuality in Japan are imported Western notions, which have to be rooted out. It is only by exposing this fallacy and its flawed methodological base, that I can then begin to introduce native theories of individualism and individuality.

In Section Two, I argue that an identifiably Japanese individualism is developing in Japan, firmly rooted in Japan's past. Individualism and individuality have been traced back at least as far as the Kamakura period (1185-1333), and have continued to inform and define Japanese sense of self and society in recent years. I briefly review examples of these native concepts of indivduality, drawing particular attention to the fact that notions of individuality and community in these examples, mutually constitute each other and define each other and cannot be separated from each other. This mutual inseperability of individuality and community is just as evident in the examples of the relationships between individual selves and collective selves among the employees at GA.

Section Three begins by reviewing work done on the Japanese self which emphasises the mutual constitution of selves in Japan, both individual and collective. I then move on to the analysis of my reseach data in detail. I started by I asked the employees what being an individual (*kojin*) means, what belonging to a 'group (*shuudan*)' means, and what the relationship is between an individual (*kojin*) and a group (*shuudan*). By asking them to discuss various words and concepts, the

topography of individual selves and collective selves within GA emerged, through the suitability and unsuitability of various terms to describe the relationship between individual selves and between individual selves and collective selves. A more precise meaning of these terms also began to emerge from these discussions.

Section Four looks in detail at the concepts of *seken* and *sekentei*, which demonstrate clearly the existence of and the recognition of an individual self in Japanese concepts of personhood. The relationship between *seken* and *sekentei* also demonstrates, not only the that individual selves and collective selves mutually constitute each other and have consistently been perceived in terms of each other, but also how this happens. In other words, it begins to look as though the relationship between*seken* and *sekentei* is the native model describing the dynamic relationship of between shifting selves, individual and collective. The suitability or unsuitability of *seken* and *sekentei* as terms to describe the relationships between selves within GA, reveals much about these relationships, as well as information about two concepts that have received little attention, but which, I will argue, are just as important as other terms used by anthropologists to understand Japanese society, forcing us to rethink how anthropologists have mapped social space in Japan. The ignoring of *seken* and *sekentei* also brings into question how is it that anthropologists come to privilege some aspects of the societies they study over others. As an example, a listener to a conversation between Japanese is far more likely to hear the words *seken* and *sekentei* than the words *tatemae* or *honne*, or *omote* and *ura*, to explain why they are motivated to act in a certain way.

In the final section I argue that the relationship between selves which is emerging within GA indicates that the privileging of 'individuality (*kosei*)', and of the individual self (*kojin* and *jibun*) requires us to reevaluate the terms *tatemae* (public behaviour), *honne* (true human feeling), *omote* (front), *ura* (back), *uchi* (inside), *soto* (outside), and *giri*, as concepts to describe and understand the Japanese self in post-Bubble Japan.

*******

### 4.1) Rehabilitating the Individual: 1

Recent studies of self and personhood in Japan begin by launching into an attack on classical Western concepts of the individual by saying how insidious and 'incorrigible' (Kondo 1990, 26) this essentialist 'self' is (Rosenberger 1992: x; Kondo 1990: 26). To elaborate, this concept of self is a (male) self who is an autonomous subject, who exercises (his) sovereign choice, who decides, evaluates, calculates, is self directing, and independent, and "who relates to others as no less autonomous agents" (Lukes 1985: 298). Rosenberger (1992), on the first page of the introduction to her edited book, has this to say:

> Previous studies had restricted the idea of self in Japan to Western, oppositional and implicitly essentialist categories of 'individual' and 'society'. Although this opposition continues to *haunt* us - and, given the rhetorical necessities, is almost impossible to *escape* - our purpose was to ask new questions about the constitution of self in Japan (*Rosenberger 1992: xi. my emphasis*).

These recent studies of Japanese self and society talk of "shifting interaction" (Rosenberger 1992: 14), "a sliding scale of self and other" (Kondo 1990: 26), "a relational self...highly embedded in social context" (Bachnik 1994: 5). But while these studies talk of a concept of the Japanese self grounded in empirical analysis, emphasising 'multiple selves' (Kondo 1990) dependent on situation, they dogmatically refuse to talk about selves as individuals. Rosenberger's introduction is primarily an attempt to root out any traces of Western individualism in oppositional analyses in the anthropological canon on Japan, especially those of individual/society and Western/Non-Western. She appears to confuse individuality with individualism, and also starts from the false premise that all discussions of individuality come from Western concepts, and consequently should be disregarded. She proceeds by installing a huge monolithic Other by telling us how "Westerners living in industrial, economically 'modern' societies idealize themselves as individuals". Within a page of avowing to escape this opposition, she reinstates it:

> Westerners often affirm this ideal by viewing non-Westerners as swayed by emotion, relation, and context - only able to think in the specific case and then only by metaphor. It follows that Western societies can take the 'higher' form of democracy because decision making can be entrusted to the hands of rational individuals, whereas non-Western societies require a strong collectivity for cohesion and control of people enmeshed in the immediacy of relationship and superstition...This point of view remains with anthropologists, even those studying complex, industrialized non-Western societies (*Rosenberger 1992, 2*).

Rosenberger then continues to instate very questionable dichotomies by setting up a distinction between 'Japanese-trained' and 'Western-trained' anthropologists. Just what her criteria of distinction are, we are not told. She says how "Japanese-trained scholars ...emphasize Japan's concept of the collective self, embedded in social context and the Japanese natural world." (Rosenberger 1992: 12). By saying this, she again sets up an opposition between Japan and the West. She talks of Japanese-trained scholars emphasising the collective self and context, just as she castigates Westerners for emphasising that "non-Western societies require a strong collectivity for cohesion and control of people enmeshed in the immediacy of relationship and superstition" (Rosenberger 1992: 2).

The debates that alerted the academic world to Orientalism, 'the politics of culture' and 'the politics of representation', were conducted nearly twenty years ago. Since that time, anthropologists of Japan have reflexively tried to remove their cultural presuppositions and hold them up for scrutiny. They have been studying Japan in the context of history and the politics of culture in order to allow authentic Japanese voices and selves to reveal themselves. These voices tell us of dichotomies and we should listen. Drawing our attention to hidden assumptions is fine, but Rosenberger has allowed her rightful criticism of Western ideas of individualism to stray into her representation of concepts of individualism in Japan.

The move towards the study of self and society through studies of highly situational multiple selves is a good analytical move, but although it is Rosenberger's professed aim to move beyond dichotomies, because she sets up an opposition between the West/Japan and ties it to the dichotomy of individual/society, she is unable to move beyond them at all. She sets up a dichotomy between Western-trained anthropologists and Japanese-trained anthropologists, and less obviously reinstates the opposition of individual/society by damning the inclusion of concepts of the individual within her theoretical framework, on the basis that all theories of the individual in Japan are Western theories imposed by 'Western-trained' anthropologists. This is simply not the case (4.2).The dichotomy of individual/society, in the form of West/Japan, is to be found in varying degrees in the four islands of Japan, not only, or predominantly, in the work and subconscious of all 'Western-trained' anthropologists. Rosenberger writes "The temptation of such general conclusions continually bedevils Western-trained scholars of Japan" (Rosenberger 1992: 2).

She fails to recognise the role of 'Western' ideals of the individual in forming Japanese conceptions of self. Countless times a day many Japanese use an idealised Westerner to define themselves and Japan through the oppositional dichotomy of Japan/The West.[1] Hendry also makes this point (Hendry 1992). How Japanese situate themselves in relation to this idealized individual tells us a lot about how they see the history of their relationship with 'the West', and how they see and think about themselves. At the moment, with attitudes towards individuality and with ideas of what individuality 'is' changing, it is vital that we recognise these discourses and not discard them because they are a part of a past whose values we no longer regard as acceptable, tenable or legitimate. Any discussion of selves with a degree of autonomy, such as being loci of responsibility and originality, and given the task of individual thought and action, should not dogmatically be cast as the Western-trained anthropologist "grappling...with the ideology of the individual which is embedded in their theories and common sense views." (Rosenberger:1992.4). Kondo presents a similar argument, closing off areas of analysis, in her 1990 study *Crafting Selves*:

> Work done on the 'Japanese self', in the light of my particular experiences...can point us toward the profound challenges such scholarship offers to seemingly incorrigible Western assumptions about the primacy of 'the individual' and the boundedness and fixity of personal identity (*Kondo 1990: 26)*.

Such an approach assumes that any discussion of individuality in a Japanese setting must be premised on 'Western' concepts of self, imposed by the (Western) analyst. This is clearly not the

[1] In virtually all cases where a Japanese uses 'the West', s/he will be referring to the United States', and similarly 'Westerners' invariably refers to Americans.

case. Ideas about selves expressed in terms of both ethics and practices in GA indicates that new ideas about individuality are beginning to emerge in Japan, but that these ideas are firmly grounded in Japanese concepts of personhood and society. By refusing to talk about 'individuals (*kojin*)' and 'individuality (*kosei*)', and on such fallacious grounds, we are indicted to ignore native concepts of individuality and impose another 'Western' concept of the self. This is both methodologically wrong-headed and ethically unacceptable. It is also simply untrue that we are helplessly bound by 'incorrigible assumptions'. Japanese theories of the self discussed in the Japanese language, and then carefully in English, are not bound by the 'rhetorical necessities' Rosenberger talks of.

*******

### 4.2) Rehabilitating the Individual: 2

Ikegami (1995) tells us that an 'honourific individualism' existed in Japan, at least since the Kamakura period (1185-1333). This began prior to the Tokugawa or Edo period (1600-1868) when a medieval honour culture which placed a high value on aggressive competitiveness developed. This aggressive competitiveness relied heavily on a sense of individual autonomy and concomitant individuality:

> In the elitist honour culture of that period there flourished the strong belief that the ultimate responsibility for the different requirements of social honour creating an honourific identity belonged not to society as a whole but to each member of that society (*Ikegami 1995: 370*).

Ikegami tells us that the Tokugawa period was a period of increasingly more organised hierarchical social strata, which led to a highly institutionalised culture that placed a value on organisation and conformity: "Thus the samurai culture was considerably refocused" (Ikegami 1995: 335). This led to the twin aspirations of 'competitive individuality' and 'orderly conformity', and although an honour culture based on self-assertive individualism continued, it was: "reconstituted as a much more hierarchically ordered value" (Ikegami 1995: 337), with both the samurai and the state authorities sharing the cultural idioms of honourific competitiveness within a set of institutions constructed and maintained by a cohesive and stable political authority.

During the Tokugawa period, Ikegami tells us that there were three major changes in the honour culture. There was a shift in the expression of honour, whereby it was less associated with violence and more with virtuous self-discipline. There was also a shift in the locus of honour, from the personal to the organisational, through the shared destiny of a master's (*daimyō*) house. This shift, Ikegami argues, caused a good deal of conflict and still lies at the heart of a tension between personal goals and organisational goals in modern Japan. Thirdly, there was a shift in the source of honour, from performance to status.[2] Nevertheless, performance remained important, as the militaristic tradition legitimated the position of the samurai over the other classes, and remained: "a prized cultural resource suitable for generating individualistic action and for expressing individuality" (Ikegami 1995: 349).

Ikegami coins the term 'honourific individualism' to describe the individualism which developed in Japan, as separate from the term usually associated with 'modern Western capitalist societies'. She describes honourific individualism as a type of 'possessive individualism' (*cf* MacPherson 1962; Pocock 1985), whereby a samurai's individuality was inseparably connected to his political effectiveness as a warrior (Ikegami 1995: 353). The samurai was constantly required to assert himself and maintain control. Ikegami tells us that medieval samurai culture always aspired towards independence and self-direction:

> This individualism did not imply that a particular samurai would always rebel against the limitations imposed by institutional requirements and designated roles. Rather, 'honourific individualism' meant that

[2]These developments would be consistent with the growing Neo-Confucian orthodoxy during the Tokugawa period.

> such a man would always take these boundaries seriously, even though the ultimate decision about whether or not to conform would be his own and no other's (*Ikegami 1995: 371*).

Self-assertive and flamboyant, a spirit of self-reliance developed among the samurai through the need to defend one's property and reputation. Honourific individualism, however, developed within a concomitant network of effective social relationships and political alliances, so that during the Kamakura period, honourific individualism became a socially accepted goal through honourable vassalage.

As the country passed into the Meiji period (1868-1912), Ikegami writes that the samurai were given a new lease of life: "After the Meiji Restoration, the honourific sentiment was harnessed to the task of nation-building, combined with the fresh incentives of individual economic aspirations." (Ikegami 1995: 362). The honourific sentiment was used to create a moral consensus for nation-building, while honourific individualism, latent for much of the Tokugawa period, was given free reign through the opportunities for economic development. At the same time, the samurai, educated and with a strong individualist tradition, embraced European liberal thought:

> that emphasised the value of the individual and a spirit of self-help. The first generation of Meiji intellectuals... consisted mostly of former samurai who had grown up within the samurai culture. It was their own indigenous spirit of self-awareness and personal pride that found Western models of individualism and independence attractive idioms for the expression of their prideful personhood (*Ikegami 1995: 364*).

Ikegami tells us that there was a moral dilemma presented by the conflict between individuality and conformity in the Meiji period, but that rather than this conflict appearing as a result of 'Western' individualistic values clashing with 'traditional Japanese values', as is generally accepted both inside and outside Japan, it was instead a reformulation of a cultural process of balancing an honourific individualism with civic duty which had been in motion since the Medieval period, particularly through the Tokugawa period, and into the modern era. Ikegami argues that it would have been impossible to bring about the enormous changes which occurred in the Meiji era without the 'persuasive initiative and determined persistence' of men heavily influenced by the samurai honour culture. "It is impossible to imagine the industrialisation of a late-developing society without the presence of individualistic agents of change" (Ikegami 1995: 366). This burst of individualism at the beginning of the Meiji period may not have been solely in the tradition of the samurai honour culture. Irokawa (1985) and Yamaguchi Masao (personal communication) describe a similar individualism developing among the villages surrounding Tokyo in the early Meiji period. Like the samurai elites in Japanese society which Ikegami describes, this 'grass-roots' movement was inspired by imported Western texts, but it is interesting to consider that these ordinary men and women might have been drawing on other traditions of Japanese individualism lying dormant in society, not only the 'honourific individualism' Ikegami writes about.

Ikegami concludes by saying that Japanese studies in the West and in Japan, has tended to focus on the civic duty aspect of samurai ethics and the honour culture of the samurai, ignoring the individualism. Ikegami's opinion as to why the individualistic tradition in Japan has gone unnoticed is because scholarship on modern Japan which attempts to discover the roots of modern Japanese institutions and values only goes back as far as the Tokugawa period, and because there has been a tendency to focus on what is 'peculiar to Japanese social institutions and organisations'. In addition,

I would add that individualism has also been ideologically positioned as non-Japanese, not only by various discourses of the self in Japan, but also by some Western scholars. Ikegami notes that it has been the Japanese themselves who have presented samurai honour in terms of self-sacrificial loyalty, ignoring the proud self-determination inherent in samurai honorific individualism, covering over the tracks which indicate its continuity into the Modern era. She finishes by noting that scholars have then reproduced this view.

Ikegami takes us as far back as the 11th Century A.D., but the roots of this individualism are evident as far back as the 7th Century A.D. at least. There are clear references to the existence of, and moral sanctioning of, individuality and difference in Article Ten of the Seventeen Article Constitution of Prince Shõtoku. Article Ten states: "Nor let us be resentful when others differ from us. For all men have hearts, and each heart has its own leanings. Their right is our wrong, and our right is their wrong. We are not unquestionably sages, and they are not unquestionably fools. Both of us are simply ordinary men (Tsunoda, et al. 1958: 50). The reference to 'ordinary men' also indicates an early concept of equality present in Confucian cosmology and personhood, where all men are equal under Heaven, and all are regarded as, equally, capable of affecting the correspondence between Heaven and Earth. The perception of the individual self in Confucian, and particular Neo-Confucian cosmology is of a rational thinker who understands the process of causation between Heaven and Earth, and who acts premeditatively, autonomously, to maintain all correspondences between Heaven and Earth.

An individualism is also very evident in the Buddhism of the period, which required individuals to follow their own 'inner light (*prajna*)'. This individual self is recognised to be both autonomous and intersubjective in a similar way to the individual self which characterises the new individualism emerging in Japan. This Buddhist individual self is regarded as autonomous because it is imbued with the power of reason, and given the responsibility to act, individually, on that reasoning, and regarded as possessing the ability to attain enlightenment through the powers of the individual mind. But it is also intersubjective because of the belief in moral causation and the interdependence (*en*) of all things. The self in the Buddhist view is a locus of what Carrithers (1985) calls 'systematic thought and systematic self discipline' which is 'the central concern of human existence'. This paramountcy of individual value is what Dumont (1985) regards as the condition of individualism.

We can conjecture that individualism existed in Japan prior to the arrival of Confucianism and Buddhism, from the writings of the National Learning (*kokugaku*) movement in the 18th Century. For Motoori Norinaga, one of the leading lights of the movement, the spontaneity of the 'life-impulse', represented by Takami-musubi (vitality) and Kami-musubi (fertility), two of the gods from the Shintõ pantheon, were more relevant to the lives of ordinary people, as they explained the Japanese sensibility, 'which was more emotional than rational'. This emotional, spontaneous self was presented as in opposition to the highly rational Neo-Confucian self of the period, which was the dominant construction of the individual self during the Tokugawa period. But by the end of the Tokugawa period, Shintõ, Buddhist, and Confucian ideas about everything had become so fused, that the individual self across all sections of society was also, undoubtedly, a combination of

Confucian, Buddhist, and native Shintõ conceptions of the self. What all these concepts of the self have in common, is a sense of self as both subjective and autonomous, but also, as an agent of moral causation, intersubjective and interdependent.

Until recently, until the collapse of the Bubble in 1991-2, discourses of individualism tended to fall under the subject of *kojinshugi*. *Kojinshugi*, a translation of the term 'individualism' from the Western concept discussed in **4.1**, was imported from Western intellectual works, first in mid-19th century Dutch texts, and, over the years, reworked through a series of dichotomies to produce a whole range of categories and personal characteristics which have been strategically used to help define and shape the Japanese sense of self, and on which publishing empires have been built. *Kojinshugi* has tended to have a negative meaning (Moeran 1989), and it is significant that the word *kojinshugi* was never used by any of my interviewees to describe the new individualism taking root in the aftermath of the Bubble. In fact, I did not hear the word *kojinshugi* mentioned in any discussions concerning the promoting or encouraging of individuality (*kosei*) or individual ability (*kojin no nõryoku*) while I was doing fieldwork, be they discussions I had, or those via the various media. Bearing in mind its ideological roots, mention of *kojinshugi* has been a defining characteristic for 'Western' society in Japan, and has been regarded as unJapanese in this sense since the late Meiji period (Gluck 1985), and at other times in the past (Wakabayashi 1986; Nosco 1984). Framed in these ways, *kojinshugi* characteristics were frowned upon and discouraged. In fact 'discouraged' is a little euphemistic, the pressure through coercion to not be *wagamama*, 'selfish', or *jibun katte ni suru*, 'to do as you please', was, and still is, a part of daily life in Japan, as Matsubara-san indicated in **3.6**. Moeran (1989) also regards *kojinshugi* as essentially referring to negative personal characteristics associated with idealised Westerners, and he also suggests that *kosei*, 'individuality' is the locus of what is regarded as good about individualism (*kojinshugi*), and is regarded as entirely Japanese (Moeran 1989: 70). My own data also indicates that these self-centred 'Western' characteristics are not regarded as synonymous with 'individuality (*kosei*)'.

Moeran's discussion of developments in the pottery village where he undertook research, shows how the development of an individualism among the potters was inimical to the continuity of an organisational structure which foregrounds horizontally equal collectivities of selves, internally ordered hierarchically by age, rather than individual selves. Moeran describes how influential critics, and then consumers, focusing on individuals rather than 'community' and 'unknown craftsmen', undermined the organisational structure of the community, threatening to change it from a community ordered on seniority and community, to one ordered on talent, or performance, and individuality (Moeran 1989). The problems which were caused in the village can be seen as a precedent for the situations which are developing in many Japanese companies, as they move from reward systems which primarily reward a collectivity of selves, to reward systems which single out individuals and reward them.

Moeran tells us that the potters believed that the pots express the individual potter's character, by being imbued with the potter's 'heart/mind/soul (*kokoro*)' (Moeran 1989: 90). Consequently, there must always have been an element of conflict within households and villages, resulting from the veiling of the recognition of individual talent by attributing success to the

household or village in general, and the senior males in particular. What is important to recognise is the existence and recognition by those concerned of individuality (*kosei*), expressed through the concept of *kokoro* in the case Moeran describes. Elsewhere, Moeran continues his analysis of *kokoro* as a key concept in Japanese attempts to reconcile the tensions that exist between individual selves and collective selves (1989: 70). Over the course of various discussions, he reveals the existence of native concepts of individuality and individual selves. He describes how the tensions that exist between the desires and goals of collective selves and individual selves in Japan are mediated and rationalised through the ambivalent use of *kokoro*. The balancing act which Moeran describes, is one: "between the two points of spontaneity and social exchange, on the one hand, and outright individualism and 'negative reciprocity', on the other" (Moeran 1989: 70). Moeran regards this balancing act as being negotiated on a 'semantic tightrope', indicating that spontaneity and social exchange, and outright individualism and negative reciprocity, are essentially the same. Difference lies in who is passing judgment, or where they are and at what time. By moving forward in time to the post-Bubble environment, what is essentially the same as Moeran is discussing, is increasingly regarded as positive, as a result of the passing of time and changes in conditions. What Moeran describes are Japanese concepts of individuality, which are evident today in the new individualism among the employees at GA, and among the party goers (7.1).

Among the potters, spontaneity is the source of creativity and originality. The potters Moeran studied knew this, hence the importance of individuality (*kosei*), as spontaneity, realised through the expression of *kokoro*. What is essentially happening in GA, is that the same process is being recognised and nurtured. *Kokoro* or *kosei*, and other words and concepts which were rationalised as being distinct from Western notions of self in Moeran's examples, may not be consciously recognised in the example of GA, but the characteristics they describe are present. In a further discussion of *kokoro*, Moeran suggests how the individuality which is evoked by the use of *kokoro* in advertising (Moeran 1989: 69), is harnessed to stress the importance of relationships, thus transcending 'outright individualism' of the kind associated with 'Western' individualism: "Thus, however individualistic you are invited to be, you are often invited to be individualistic *for somebody*...both for yourself and on behalf of others." (Moeran 1989: 69. *emphasis in original*). This is both reminiscent of Shintō and Buddhist morally-driven social causality, and very evident in GA, where the nurturing of individuality and originality is both openly discussed as both for the benefit of the employees themselves and the company, and the company's customers, expressed through the twin goals of the personal development of individuality and customer satisfaction, and is also visible in the organisational structure and command structure of the company (3.3).

Miyanaga (1991) presents a theory of 'emerging individualism', which I will discuss in greater detail in 6.1. She argues that 'active individualists' have existed on the periphery of society, trying to establish their own values (Miyanaga 1991: 128), but have tended to give up their individualistic values, and move into the mainstream of society, in a search for status. Essentially, this has involved them succumbing to the values and practices that might be descxribed as constituting the various group models of Japanese society (Befu 1990). However, with the growth of a flexible economy (5.2) during the 1980s, they have been able to maintain their individualistic

values *and* move into the mainstream. Miyanaga does not say what constitutes this individualism, but she does, none the less, argue that a tradition of individualism has existed in Japan 'since the turn of the century'. She is presumably referring to the introduction of Western values during the Meiji period, and she does not, therefore, argue for a tradition of Japanese individualism. However, she then turns to her main argument, that a 'passive individualism' has been growing within the mainstream since the 1970s. She argues that more individualistic Japanese, known as the *shin jinrui* (new breed) were given the task of using their initiative in the workplace, but that their senior colleagues in particular, could not accommodate these different values. Consequently, these more individualistic young Japanese withdrew into their own 'private groups'. Miyanaga does not tell us the roots of this individualism, but she does argue that individualism is a part of Japanese society, and that, during the 1980s, it began to emerge within mainstream society.

There is also a kind of individuality associated with maturity in Japan. This kind of individualism has been identified by Doi (1973) as *jibun ga aru*, 'to have a self'.

> Its essence [*jibun ga aru*] does not lie in rejection of the group; but an individual is said to have a *jibun* when he can maintain an independent self that is never negated by the group (*Doi:1973: 134*) .

Doi argues that *jibun* is a reflexive 'I', and that to have a *jibun*, to have a self, is to have an awareness of self as, what Inoue (1977) refers to as a 'doing subject' (*kōi shuutai* ). Conversely, to not have a *jibun* is for a person to not have an awareness of themselves as a separate, empowered, doing subject. Doi describes a person with a *jibun* as someone who premeditatively, willingly submits to the aims and intentions, to the will, of a collective self. The existence of difference is regarded as normal, however, maturity is being able to submit to a given collective self while still maintaining an independent self.[3] To not have a *jibun* is to be unable to maintain an independent self. A person who is *jibun ga nai* will still have a sense of being a separate doing subject, but, according to Doi, this awareness arises, not from feeling empowered, but from the spectre of disagreement and separation, whereby the desire to belong will be greater than the pain of disagreement (Doi 1973: 134). The important point is the question of reflexivity, or self-awareness. An individual, a person who has a *jibun*, will decide to act independently. A person who has no *jibun* is unable to act independently. Lebra also comments: "Self saturated in the interactional world is...negatively described by Japanese as *jibun ga nai* (devoid of self), and is advised to retrieve itself, *jibun wo torimodosu*" (Lebra 1992: 111).

Hendry (1992) also argues that the individual self is recognised and regarded as important. Looking at the socialization of young Japanese, she comments that:

> Alongside the group identity which they are learning, [the children] also become well aware of the individual charactersistics of their peers, and they learn to think of each other as they cooperate in group endeavour...Individual effort does not pass unnoticed (*Hendry 1992: 60*).

Hendry is not talking about how selves are perceived, and conceived, but she is in no doubt that the individual, as a social actor, is recognised and valued. This is the first step towards building a theory of the individual self, and how it is constituted by other selves, both individual and collective. Hendry also stresses the interrelationship between the individual self and other individual selves, and between the individual self and collective selves, generally. And although she is careful to stress

[3]This description of the self accords with Confucian ethics.

that 'individuality' (*kosei*) is socially circumcribed, she argues for the individual as an important social actor in Japanese society.

Rosenberger (1992) states: "*Jibun* literally means 'self part' - part of a larger whole that consists of groups and relationships. *Jibun* is always valued in relations to that larger whole (*cf* Dumont 1970)" (Rosenberger 1992: 4). Rosenberger's opinion on the meaning of *jibun* is influenced by her refusal to acknowledge the Japanese self as an individual self. *Ji* is the *on* (Chinese) reading of the character, which when standing alone is read as *mizukara*, the Japanese reading. It means 'oneself'. It appears in many compounds, which, when referring to human beings, always refer to Ego. In the word *jibun*, the character means 'self', 'oneself'. The character *bun* has many meanings, the most familiar of which is 'part', but 'part' is not the only meaning. Of all the various meanings, 'degree', 'extent', 'condition', 'state' (Halpern 1990) are more appropriate in this instance. Rosenberger's assumption that *jibun* means 'self part', rather than 'extent of self' or 'state of self' is based solely on her argument that Japanese persons regard themselves as a part of a greater self. That is to say, regard themselves somehow incomplete as individual selves. Such a conclusion is also based on the premise that Japanese breakdown the meaning of the word *jibun* into its constituent parts, regardless of which meaning they assign to *bun*. I have talked to many Japanese about the way meaning is constructed in compound words by bringing together individual characters which have their own meaning. I myself find it fascinating. Yet all Japanese I discussed this with don't even seem to notice that a compound meaning is constructed from the meanings of the various characters that make up the compound. In other words, even if a word is made up of more than one character, the compound has its own irreducible meanings. Therefore, I would conclude that *jibun* doesn't even mean 'extent of self' or 'state of self', it simply means 'self', a person, an individual sentient being that is 'I'.

Even if *jibun* can logically be argued to mean 'part of a larger self', how the word *jibun* was used by Japanese in discussions of the relationship between individuals and groups (**4.3**) also clearly indicates that Japanese regard the individual self as complete and discrete from other individual selves. A number of the employees and the party-goers described how a person is expected to 'suppress their self (*jibun wo narubeku osaeru*)' or 'deny their self (*jibun wo korosu*)' when among other selves in a 'group (*shuudan*)'. This perception of the self clearly indicates that the individual self, rather then becoming whole, is actually regarded as compromised when in a 'group (*shuudan*)'.

Kuwayama (1992) argues that *jibun* is: "a reflexive pronoun which is often used to indicate the self in opposition to *hito*. *Hito* is the most generally used word to mean a[nother] person or people" (Kuwayama 1992). Kuwayama's description of *jibun* as being 'in opposition to *hito*' also suggests that he regards *jibun* as having distinct boundaries. He is uneasy about analyses which submerge the self within a category of 'insiders' where it is given no formal recognition. "This is unfortunate because, even though the Japanese self is relational...the self has an identity of its own" (Kuwayama 1992: 145).

Lebra (1992), searching for a means of apprehending a sense of self which exists in all situations within the framework which regards selves as multiple and constantly shifting, draws on the local idea of an inner self: "that provides a fixed core for self-identity and subjectivity, and forms

a potential basis of autonomy" (Lebra 1992: 112). Rosenberger's comment on Lebra's paper is: "she seems to be searching for an essential core of individuality that fits with Western theory." (Rosenberger 1992: 9). This is pure assumption and completely ignores the fact that Japanese do talk of an 'inner self'. What we see developing is a kind of tyranny, where all conceptions of individuality are regarded as being the result of Western ideas being imposed from outside. Together with the belief that Western ideas of individuality are politically unsound, we are asked to search for an acceptable theory of the self without the individual.

Lebra's 'inner self' and 'outer self' (Lebra 1992) is evident in Ikegami's (1995) discussion of honourific individualism, when describing how honourific individualism was constructed among the samurai in the Medieval period, Ikegami tells us that 'a sense of selfhood' emerged:

> though a process of bringing a socially embedded sense of self (that is, the self considered from an intersubjective viewpoint) and a more subjective sense of self (the self viewed from its own internal perspective) into *proximity* (*Ikegami 1995: 372. emphasis in original*).

Ikegami's 'sense of self' as both an inter-subjective self *and* an autonomous self, where a person's 'sense of self' is heightened when an individual self comes into proximity with another person, conveys the dynamics of human interaction and the intersubjectivity of the human self, while incorporating the evident consciousness of self as bounded by the physical limits of the human body. The employees at GA and those who attend underground dance music Techno parties all described a sense of self within these two parameters, revealed through their perception of their selves as individuals in relationships with other individuals. They perceive themselves as individual but in a mutually reinforcing arrangement with others, so that individuality is only possible when there is somebody to be individual 'with'. What emerges is a sense of self which is individual, but which is very aware that this sense of individuality is only possible through community. At the same time, there is a very clear awareness that community is dependent on all members being individual. Individuality through community, community through individuality, mutually constituting and defining each other. What indicates that the new individualism which is emerging in Japan is a fundamentally Japanese individualism traceable back through history, is this emphasis on the importance of community in generating individuality and maintaining it. It is this fundamental difference from Western theories of individualism, which stress autonomy and individual sovereignty, that marks out the new individualism emerging in Japan after the Bubble as identifiably Japanese.

*******

### 4.3) Individuality and Community

I have described a number of theories of the individual, beginning with the classical, generalized, idealized, Western individual (Lukes 1985). I then discussed how Western theories of the self have been co-opted by Japanese to construct an idealised Other, as part of an oppositional theory of the Japanese self, in which characteristics associated with this idea of individuality are unJapanese. In Japan, this individuality popularly came to be regarded as individuality *per se*, defining Westerners, and known as *kojinshugi*, 'individualism', which, generally speaking, was regarded negatively. I then considered a number of native Japanese theories of the individual. Moeran (1989) describes how critics and buyers, by drawing attention to individual craftsmen in a pottery village, challenged the aesthetic ideals which drew the attention of critics and buyers in the first place, and threatened to disrupt the social organisation of the community. Moeran noted that 'individuality (*kosei*)' was closely linked to ideas about creativity and ability, both expressed and recognised in a belief in the uniqueness of every individual, which is manifested through the *kokoro* of every potter. This was together with a belief that appreciation of the pots was through individual interpretation from personal subjective standards of beauty (Moeran 1989). What is important to note is that aesthetic and ethical beliefs concerning 'individuality (*kosei*) are just as important in the village where Moeran studied as those concerning 'community', and that 'individuality' and 'community' cannot be separated from each other, one cannot exist without the other, and changes to one result in changes to the other.

We find the same fundamental characteristics of th e relationship between individual selves and collective selves in Japan in Doi's (1973) discussion of *jibun*. The individuality suggested by a self defined as *jibun ga aru*, a person which has a *jibun*, a 'self', can only be defined by that person's relationship with other persons. In other words, individuality, as defined by *jibun ga aru* is dependent on the individual self being part of a community. What we see emerging are Japanese theories about individuality which are also theories of community. Maintenance of the individual self is then ethically prescribed by the association of *jibun ga aru* with adulthood, where a mature person is expected both to conform to, and contribute to the community, and at the same time maintain an independent, individual self. Again ideals of individuality and community cannot be separated, and have to be described in terms of each other. The same interdependence of individuality and community in mutually constituting each other is described in Ikegami's (1995) honourific individualism, where an individualistic sense of self 'emerges' from a process whereby a more socially embedded, intersubjective sense of self is brought into proximity with a more subjective sense of self, viewed from an internal perspective.

These same themes of mutual constitution and dynamic interdependence concerning the individual self and its relation to other individual selves and various collective selves, emerge in the work of Smith (1983) and Plath (1975, 1980, 1989), also Lebra (1974, 1976) and Bachnik (1986). Lebra

(1976) begins her assessment of the Japanese individual self and its relationship to other individual selves and collective selves, with the following 'personal observation': "the Japanese are extremely sensitive to and concerned about social interaction and social relationships." (Lebra 1976: 2). She stresses the situationally-dependent nature of Japanese behaviour, and puts forward a theory of situational interaction. But it is in terms of morality, that Lebra grounds situationality as a defining characteristic of the Japanese self, both individual and collective. This is significant because, as will become apparent from my own data, *seken* has been, and still is, the primary moral framework of Japanese society (**4.4, 7.3**). Lebra writes:

> The clear-cut dualism...that is a characteristic of unilateral determinism is not congenial to the Japanese sense of morality. For the Japanese, goodness or badness is a relative matter, relative to social situation and impact...Nor are the Japanese, who consider morality socially relative, keen on systematising moral doctrines as independent entities (*Lebra 1976: 11*).

Moral doctrines in Japan are indeed typically not systematised as independent entities, as within the terms of an objective absolute morality such as typically exists in the Christian societies of Western Europe and the U.S (**1.3**). Moral doctrine in Japan is conventionally, in everyday life, present and has a coercive power through that which is regarded as *seken nami* (consistent with *seken* rules, or 'good') (**4.4**), which is highly situational, and consequently difficult to document. Although Lebra does not mention *seken*, it can be located in her analysis (Lebra 1976) as fundamental to explaining both why, and how, the Japanese self emerges situationally.

The perception that the Japanese sense of self and its relationship to other selves was somehow different from how individuals brought up in a Western Hellenistic/Christian traditon perceive their self in relation to other selves, was made early on. Benedict (1946) describes her perception of what has subsequently been described as a situational or multiple individual self, as 'contradictory' (Benedict 1946: 2). This is because of a perceived lack of consistency of self when motivation and action is thought to emerge from a domain of transcendent truth and universal reason, when in fact it emerges from a domain of situational truth and reason (*seken*).

For Lebra (1976), this situational self is best understood by focusing on the relationship between selves, rather than focusing on individuals *per se*. She develops the idea of relationship as being governed by domains of situational interaction. Based on the dichotomies of *uchi/soto*, and *omote/ura* Lebra fashions three domains of interaction. There are potentially four domains, but Lebra regards one domain, *uchi-omote* as 'unlikely to occur'. Lebra is careful to make to point that these domains define 'situations'. That is to say, *uchi* and *soto*, *omote* and *ura* describe a situation in whcih action takes place, but cannot describe or explain the details of a given interaction between selves. As Lebra herself notes: "the three domains are far from satisfactory, [and] to make it more satisfactory we...must proceed to interaction behaviour" (Lebra 1976: 113). In other words, we must then concentrate on the details of the interaction, for which we require other means of analysis than *uchi* and *soto*, and *omote* and *ura*.

Bachnik (1986) also focuses on relationships, and the significance of situation in defining, constructing, constraining, and explaining them. She also regards selves as interdependent and mutually constitutive, like Lebra. Bachnik tells us that the importance of relationships in Japanese life is well understood: "Yet major difficulties remain in the conceptualisation of relationships."

(Bachnik 1986: 50). Bachnik rehearses the difficulties, but is unable to fashion a credible alternative. Bachnik's actors (sic) become cyphers divested of their authority to define themselves, points on a sliding scale between poles of Individual and Other, fixed by the analyst. Also, Backnik relies on *omote* and *uru* to explain action, when these domains can only partially define action, through their marking of space in which action occurs. These concepts do, to an extent, describe and explain motivation and action, but different selves will act differently within a given *omote* or *uru* setting according to other factors present. A model that can take these other more person-focused, as well as domain-focused, factors into account is required.

Bachnik quite rightly makes a point of stressing how: "Japanese relationships are constituted by practice and exist *in* space and time (Bachnik 1986: 50. *italics* in original).[4] Bachnik finds this a problem analytically, because, she argues, when relationships constituted in time and space are subsequently studied, a process of objectification occurs. She notes how Bourdieu (1977) points out that objectification omits time. However, time is surely only omitted if the analyst omits it. Arguably, it is only through analysis that time and space can 'actually' be introduced (they may be omitted in error). In the moment during which an interaction between persons occurs, time and space are momentarily suspended, obliterated, even, while the interaction is occuring, as all consciousness is focused on the individuals and their interacting. It is a saturation of the moment by the interaction itself that erases all trace of time or place in that instant. Time and place have to be reintroduced by the analyst. This is the job of the analyst: to be aware of the minutae of social process, in order to reconstitute it as it never, in fact, occurs in the moment of its being.

Both Smith (1983) and Plath (1975, 1980, 1989) are conspicuous in the way they avoid using 'bi-polar opposites' (Bachnik 1992; Tobin 1992; Hendry 1993), or 'particular elements of Japanese society' (Hendry 1993) which characterise so much of the anthropology of Japan. These constructs are very valuable in orientating both a social actor or an analyst, but both have to move very quickly to a different level of cognitive mapping in order to either act correctly or understand fully. As analytical constructs, the 'bi-polar opposite' and 'particular elements' are asked to do much more work than they are capable of, a sign that a point of analytical 'lock-in' has been reached, requiring a paradigm shift. Smith (1983) was obviously aware of the effect of theoretical path-dependence in constraining analysis, and of the consequent dangers of analytical lock-in:

> It is not mere idle speculation to suggest that our understanding of these matters would be very different today if over the past thirty-five years research had been conducted in the frame-work of the interactionist social psychology of figures like George Herbert Mead...Had the intellectual influences been different, we should long since have had an eminently plausible picture of the conception of the Japanese self. It would have been an interactionist self (*Smith 1983: 74*).

Smith's 'picture' of the Japanese self is an interactionist, situational self. However, this self is also an individual, and as an individual self it holds an important position in Smith's conception of Japanese selfhood. He tells us that "the Japanese assign a high priority to the growth of human beings as social persons" (Smith 1983: 73). Smith describes this individual self as 'constantly shifting', a 'relational "I" which is not detached from the other' (1983: 73), yet this does not lead him to deny the existence of an individual self in Japanese conceptions of selfhood, only that it is mutually

[4]Ikegami (1995) notes that it is not only Japanese relationships, but all human relationships, including those between Westerners, that are mutually constituted in time and space.

constituted by other individual selves and by community. An individual self in Japanese conceptions of self only becomes a problem if the individual self is presupposed as fixed and unchanging.

Plath also regards the Japanese self as an interactionist self: "The interactionist self...emerges - or is enacted - in social relations. Awareness [of self]...is endlessly re-created as one lives on, responding to the responses of others" (Plath 1975: 3-5).[5] And like Smith (1983), he perceives the individual self, with a 'separate subjectivity', as an indivisible actor in Japanese social relationships. Yet this individual self is embedded in 'circles' of human relationships: "engaged in long-term co-biography" (Plath 1989: 81). Clearly, the individual does not require rehabilitating in Plath's case, for he regards it as the locus of Japanese conceptions of selfhood. This self is far from discrete or autonomous, yet it is 'unique', Plath writes, echoing Mead, "as no human being engages exactly the same set of human relationships" (Plath 1983: 80). For Plath, individuals *in* relatonships travel together on arcs of co-experience (Plath 1989). Plath remarks that: "These arcs of co-experience are enormously diverse in onset, duration, and outcome" (Plath 1989: 82). And I would add, in content. How each individual, engaging *in* a particular interaction, *in* a particular time and place, approaches the other individual self or selves, depends on the sum of all their experiences, in time and space, and how they interpret that experience and the interaction on *that* occasion, in *that* place. Plath does not pursue analytical closure, or theoretical elegance, and his analysis and description is all the more rich and plausible as a result. One can clearly see the interplay between *seken* and *sekentei* within Plath's (1989) analysis, although he refers to neither, and I will return to his 'arcs, circles, and spheres' in 4.4.

The individual Japanese self, then, with its subjectivity, is not discrete, but is 'a unique person' (Plath 1989: 80). Therefore, I believe that an analysis has to proceed at the level of the individual self (*jibun*). Lebra tells us that the Japanese speaker will often describe relationships by differentiating between Ego and Alter, by referring to *jibun* (self) and its relationship to *hito* (another person/other people). But her suggestion of *jibun* as a key term in the analysis of the Japanese self is very soon replaced in the anthropological study of the Japanese self and society by *uchi*, effectively removing the individual self from the analysis of the Japanese self. Kuwayama (1992) notes this point, and argues for a return of *jibun* (Kuwayama 1992: 142). According to Kuwayama, *uchi* cannot account for the individual self, as it becomes 'undifferentiated' from other individual selves who constitute *uchi* at a given time and place. Attempting to re-categorize social space, Kuwayama discusses 'categories of reference others' in a 'native theory of the self' (Kuwayama 1992: 142), and begins, by suggesting a return to the fundamental distinction between *jibun* and *hito*.

> The reference other model differs from the *uchi-soto* or inside-outside model, which has been used extensively in Japanese studies, in two significant respects. First, whereas the self is ambiguous in the *uchi-soto* model, it is clearly indicated by the term *jibun* in the reference model. One weakness of the *uchi-soto* model is that the self tends to be submerged into *uchi*: the self is undifferentiated from an unspecified category of 'insiders', and is given no formal recognition...Second, the reference other model can show the interaction of the self in more concrete terms than the *uchi-soto* model (*Kuwayama 1992: 144*).

Kuwayama (1992) argues for an interaction theory of the self which recognises the person, that is, Inoue's (1977) 'doing subject (*kōi shuutai*)', as a self distinct from other selves, whether they are close

[5]Quoted in Smith 1983: 73).

or distant in social terms.

In addition to the concerns raised by Kuwayama regarding the inadequacy of *uchi* as an analytical construct in explaining Japanese selves, *seken* also indicates profound inadequacies in the *uchi/soto* model. In most analyses (most recently: Kondo 1990, 1992; Bachnik 1992, 1994; Hendry 1993; Bachnik and Quinn 1994; Rosenberger 1992, 1994; Quinn 1994), the boundary of a person's 'group' is either implied, or stated as bounded, with the linguistic markers *uchi*, meaning 'inside', and with all that is 'outside' as *soto*, meaning 'outside'. In terms of an *uchi/soto* paradigm, *seken* is another 'outside', which is very much 'inside', to which appearances, attitudes and conduct are very important. *Seken* is the world of an individual that s/he either has to be careful to maintain or feels a desire to be positively regarded by. An analysis which relies solely on an *uchi/soto* model cannot apprehend the important category of *seken*.

Secondly, in my own experience in Japan while doing fieldwork, I can only remember *soto* being used as a marker of physical space, not social space. In all my interviews, *soto* was never used as a word to describe relationships between people. I initially became aware of this when my interlocutors would seek clarification of what I meant when I asked them questions about social space outside the software company, using the word *soto*. They would invariably seek qualification by asking: "Do you mean 'other than (*hoka no*)'....?". Logically, *soto* indicates that something is not *uchi*, but to describe somebody as *soto* in a social sense is to cast them in a kind of no-man's-land, and as all social space is mapped and has its significance in relation to Ego, *soto* when used to describe social space has little meaning.

Quinn, in his paper in *Situated Meaning* (1994) presents a series of domains in which *uchi* and *soto* are referenced through language. His categories are 'spatial, 'social', 'psychological' and 'partative' (Quinn 1994). The number of social and psychological references to *soto* are minimal and are in fact spatial references which refer to Ego alone, not to a social relationship between people (Quinn 1994: 58). *Miuchi, nakama, hoka no, ta no* or, 'a Proper noun *no*', in addition to *uchi no*, is how social space is most commonly described.

Although *soto* may not be a category of social space as such, this does not necessarily invalidate *uchi/soto* as a model. *Uchi* alone is a major category of social space, which frames individual motivation and action to some considerable extent, and one can argue that as long as the separation of model and 'reality' is carefully maintained, and if the *uchi/soto* paradigm has an explanatory power, then use it. However, the existence of *seken* renders the *uchi/soto*, model problemmatic, with the potential to obscure rather than explain. The *uchi/soto* model has assumed a position of considerable authority, which itself has obscured the model's limitations. Increasingly it is rarely stated that it is being employed as a model, a point noted by Bachnik (1986).

Another major analytical construct used to describe community in Japan is the Group Model. The Group Model has been criticised by Befu (1980a, 1980b), Sugimoto and Mouer (1980), and many others, as being a highly partial and distorting construct, which, among other things, cannot account for resistence or conflict, individual motivation or action, and which presents an over harmonious picture of Japanese society. Bachnik succintly presents the criticisms as:

> "too rigidly organised, too uniform, and too devoid of personal self. The complete submergence of the self in the group, and the characterization of the group by consensus, harmony, paternalism, loyalty,

dependence, hierarchy and holism have all been brought into question" (Bachnik 1986: 53)

A major reason why this model is too rigid and uniform, and stresses consensus while being unable to account for conflict, is because it does not include a theory of the individual self, or a theory of the linkage between individual selves and collective selves. Only individuals resist, as only individuals can think and act. Groups do not think, and groups that act are groups of individuals who are acting. Plath also notes that the model "fails to bring out this person-centred interdependence of a self and its partners" (Plath 1989: 81). Many writers have noted the explanatory power of the group model while noting its failings, and it is in the model's absence of a theory of the individual self, and a theory which explains the linkage between this individual self and collective selves, that the shortcomings are located. This linkage between individual self and collective self, and the mechanism which describes and explains the dynamic relationship between individual self and collective self in Japan, is found in the concepts of *seken* and *sekentei*.

Befu critiques the Group Model (1980a, 1980b, 1990), but clearly regards it as having genuine value, indicated by his elaboration of it into four models by 1990: the Consensus model; the Stratification model; the Social exchange model; and the Conflict model, which is not really a model at all (Befu 1990). These are all different aspects of the 'Group Model', most clearly evidenced by the way Befu elides the four models in a number of ways. Just one example, is how he describes his Consensus model (the 'original Group Model) as characteristically being hierarchically organised - the defining characteristic of his Stratification model. If Befu's four models in 1990 are considered as different aspects of one model, then this is very similar to what he was suggesting in 1980.

> Nakane emphasizes the hierarchical arrangement...Hazama singles out the priority of the interest group, Iwata is subtely different from Hazama in emphasizing the motivational aspects in the orientation of individuals toward the group... I tried to create...a composite model of the 'Japanese group model' ...While such a model does not represent the ideas of any one individual, it does highlight major components found in a variety of closely related models. Accordingly, in this overview, I shall continue to refer to the 'group model' in discussing the composite model (*Befu 1980b: 188*).

During the course of my discussions, I refer to 'the group model of Japanese society', and it is Befu's 'composite model' to which I refer, as a point of reference, bearing in mind the criticisms outlined above. I do not discuss the model beyond a point of reference, and I do not develop the model to include *seken* and *sekentei*, or *jibun*. This is because this line of enquiry is beyond the scope of this thesis, although I believe that such an endeavour would be fruitful.

Finally, I want to finish this review of theories of the Japanese self, both individual and collective, by introducing briefly the local concepts of community that I will be looking at in detail. In his criticisms of the *uchi/soto* model, Kuwayama (1992) does not say that it does not have its uses, but suggests the need for a more refined model. He, together with Lebra (1992), introduces the category of *seken*, with both scholars drawing attention to "the importance of *jibun* and *seken* for Japanese human relationships" (Kuwayama 1992: 142):

> While *seken* has something in common with the Western concept of 'reference group'...or with 'the generalised other' of Mead, I identify it as the generalised audience or jury surrounding the self in an inescapable way (*Lebra 1992: 107*).

With the concept of community known as *seken*, we can see the dynamic relationship between community and the individual self present in Japanese conceptions of personhood. *Seken* is regarded

as an unknown collectivity of others (Lebra 1992), and which is a kind of reference group (Inoue 1977; Kuwayama 1992). *Seken* acts on the individual self through an individual's *sekentei*, the self that is addressed to *seken*. Every encounter an individual has mobilizes a particular set of references which orientate the self and draw on a particular manifestation of *sekentei*, what Lebra calls a 'presentational self' (Lebra 1992). Consequently *seken* and *sekentei*, community and individual, are continually remade with every encounter. Again individual and community are inseparable. It is the absence of *seken* and *sekentei*, as an ethical framwework and theory of the relationship between individual self and collective self in Japan, which explains, to a considerable extent, the vestigial explanatory power of the various group models of Japanese society (Befu 1980a, 1980b, 1990). Many of the features which characterise the various group models are characteristics of *seken* resulting from the dynamic relationship between *seken* and *sekentei*.

Because of the authority of the *uchi/soto* model and other bi-polar opposite constructs in the study of the Japanese self, and due to the often 'unacknowleged slippage from model to human group' (Bachnik 1986: 54), specific concepts of community which are a part of everyday life in Japan, such as *seken*, have tended to become overshadowed. Two other concepts of community which I consider in detail are *miuchi* and *nakama*. *Miuchi* is written with the characters *mi*, meaning body[6] and *uchi*, while *nakama*, is written with *naka*, meaning 'personal relationship', and *ma* meaning 'space between'. Inoue (1977) had this to say about *miuchi* and *nakama*:

> It has been suggested that the archetypal *uchi* is the *ie (uchi)*. This basic inner-ring [ *uchiwa*] which symbolises *uchi*, is the concept of *miuchi*. Like the popular saying 'blood is thicker than water', a blood relationship is a better way to define *uchiwa*. *Miuchi* is not the only fundamental unit (family etc.) of social life, but it is common, lasting, certainly not insignificant, and can be expected to continue over a long period of time... *Miuchi* is something which is generally thought of as relatives, but I would give particular attention to closely related groups that are like family, such as intimate *nakama uchi* and *oyabun-kobun* [hierarchical senior junior relationships]. Since the introduction of the concept of fictitious blood-relationships, true blood-relationships, territorial relationships and other social relationships, are all referred to as *miuchi*...The word *miuchi* is mainly used in colloquial speech, and in fact is not used that often. In reality, in daily conversation, when the word is used, it comes as a surprise. In today's society, where the basic unit is not kin-based, the meaning of *miuchi* has become extremely vague, and the *miuchi* relationship has also become increasingly vague. Rather than *miuchi, nakama* or *nakama uchi* have become by far and away more intimate words. The word *nakama* has become the standard word reserved for those blood-like relationships other than blood relationships...That sense of working together is also preserved in the word *nakama*. Relatives can naturally think of themselves as working together, so it isn't strange to think of both *miuchi* and *nakama* as once being considered as based on blood relationships, but subsequently being differentiated (*Inoue 1977: 82. my translation*).

Both *miuchi* and *nakama* are, according to Inoue, virtually identical and are interchangeable. Because of the fact that *miuchi* and by extension *nakama*, as it is a development of *miuchi*, are based on kinship relationships, both blood relationships (*ketsuenteki kankei*) and in-laws, it is reasonable to assume that the fictive kin relationships which form the basis of Inoue's (1977) description of *miuchi* and *nakama* will display similarities.

In this chapter so far, I have attempted to show that concepts of an individual self, and individuality, are native to Japan, and that a concept of an individual self is fundamental to our understanding of selves, individual and collective, in Japan. I have also tried to demonstrate that the individual selves and collective selves in Japan mutually constitute each other, and exist in dynamic relationship with each other. These themes have been discussed in the work of others. However, theories of the individual self and collective self in Japan are unable to move beyond the extremes of

[6] *Mi* is not simply body, as the concept includes both mind and body. The concept of *mi* also indicates local recognition of a complete social and moral Japanese individual self.

flexibility and multiplicity, in the case of individual selves, and rigidity and uniformity, in the case of collective selves, a point noted by Bachnik (1986). This is the result of no credible theory of individual self and collective self which expresses the agreed themes of situationality or multiplicity, *and* the themes of mutual constitution and dynamic interaction. And which, therefore, also describes and explains the linkage between individual selves, and between individual selves and collective selves. In the rest of this section, and in Chapter Seven, as part of a theory of the redefinition of selves, I aim to show that the related concepts of *seken* and *sekentei* may significantly contribute to such a theory of the Japanese self, both individual and collective.

*******

When I interviewed the employees at GA, I initally approached the subject of the relationship between individual and community, by asking them to describe *kojin*,[7] an 'individual', and the relationship between individual and group.[8] I began by using the term *shuudan* for 'group', following Inoue (1977):

> The meaning I assign to *shuudan* is extremely broad. For example, a class or caste (*kaikyuu*), or a social stratum (*kaisō*) are not *shuudan*, but considering objective prescriptions, everybody has some kind of ascriptive consciousness ( *kizoku ishiki*), and it is in terms of an individual (*kojin*) being ascribed to, or affiliated to, that I employ the word *shuudan* (*Inoue 1977: 73. my translation*).

A number of themes emerged from the discussions I had with my interviewees on the subject of *kojin*, *shuudan*, and the relationship between the two. The first theme I want to consider concerns individuals being expected to 'restrain their individualistic tendencies (*kojin wo narubeku osaeru*)', in Matsubara-san's words, and the employees' criticisms of these ways of thinking (*kangaekata*) and ways of doing (*shikata*). This was eloquently explained to me by Muroya-san:

> Do you mean individual identity, my own ideas of what *kojin* is? I don't have any idea, really. A living organism might be the best description. Also, to be able to say 'That was an enjoyable life' when you die. Basically, being an individual means being able to assert yourself and have a degree of advocacy (*shuuchō*), and I certainly have that desire. However, this is a country in which you cannot assert yourself (*kono kuni tte shuuchō dekinai kuni nan desu yo*) Why can't we assert ourselves? Well, if you start saying 'I'm this, I'm that', and sticking your neck out, you're going to be shot at, so to speak, and will be brought down by the flapping and screeching of those around you (*mawari kara "bata bata" kuzusareru*). Frankly, you cannot stretch yourself in this country (*nobite ikenai kuni nan de*). People want to stand up and say 'I myself think this or that', but in this country it is as if we are not allowed to (*kihonteki ni shitai desukeredomo, kuni ga sou iu koto wo sasetekurenai you da*). Although it's not actually prohibited as such, there is the pressure not to assert yourself in Japan. Although, I do pretty much what I think it is OK to do (*suki ni katte ni tekitō ni ikitemorau yō to iu kankaku de boku wa imasu*). At this company, however, you can be proud of yourself and say openly what you think (*kono kaisha ni kanshite wa....jibun no hokotta tokoro, hakkiri ieru kankaku ga aru*).

Muroya-san, like Matsubara-san and Iwata-san, quoted at the end of 3.6, see Japan as a country in

[7]Both I and my interviewees are using *jibun* and *kojin* interchangeably. *Kojin* is thought of as both a human being, or living organism (*dōbutsuteki ni ikiteikeru no ga*) as described by Muroya-san, and an individual consciousness, or self, like *jibun*. This is both expressed in the similarity of the expressions *jibun wo korosu*, 'to deny the self', *kojin wo narubeku osaeru*, 'one should suppress one's individuality', and *kojin ga nakunatteshimau*,'for the individual to disappear', as descriptions of what happens or should happen to the self in a group setting such as 'the group model of Japanese society'.

[8]*Kojin to shuudan no kankei wa nan desu ka*

which individuals are expected to 'restrain their individualistic tendencies'. Just what 'individualistic tendencies' are, and what 'restraining' them means, is important. 'Individualistic tendencies' are personal opinions and personal desires concerning both the business of the group, together with more general opinions and desires which are different from the opinions and desires of others, particularly seniors, usually males, who govern the group. Not being able to assert yourself, means not being able to express, and more importantly, act on one's opinions. Iwata-san clearly and dramatically described to me how an individual is taught to restrain themselves and conform: "When I was a child everything was *gaman* (persevere), *taeru* (endure, put up with), *jibun wo korosu* (deny oneself)". *Jibun wo korosu* is a common expression which literally means 'to kill one's self'.[9] Even allowing for the fact that the expression does not mean that one should commit suicide, it is difficult to see how the principle 'deny the self (*jibun wo korosu*)' is reconcilable with the idea of 'have a self (*jibun ga aru*)'. To 'deny the self', and at the same time 'have a self' seems contradictory.[10] Iwata-san described to me what happens to an individual's *jibun*, 'one's self', when they join a 'group (*shuudan*)':

> An individual (*kojin*), strictly speaking, is someone who has their own mind. Whereas a group (*shuudan*), to a given extent, has a common purpose. When you enter a group, there is a divergence between your prior individual self (*tashō no jibun no kokoro no zure*) and the group itself. When you enter the flow (*nagare*) of the group, you are most definitely not aiming in the same direction as you were, and you are likely to lose your self (*magirareru*) in the group. So, as a result of being affiliated to a group (*shuudan ni zoku suru koto ni yotte*), your own sense of self gradually changes (*jibun no ishiki dondon kawate ikiteru*). One might say that the coming together with one purpose is what a group opinion is. However, when you become affiliated to a group, your original idea of wanting to go here or there, without you even noticing, gets pulled in the direction of the flow of the group (*shuudan ni zoku suru yō ni naru to, jibun no motomoto no "kotchi e ikitai" to iu shisō ga shuudan no nagare ni itsu no ma ni ka awasate iku*).

Clearly, the 'group (*shuudan*)' which the employees are discussing, is highly reminiscent of a number of Befu's (1980a, 1980b, 1990) group models of Japanese society. The ideal group member is expected to undergo a change to the self, regardless of where agency resides. Whether by being pulled along 'without noticing (*itsu no ma ni ka*)', or by 'denying one's self (*jibun wo korosu*)', or by 'suppressing one's self (*kojin wo osaeru*)', the self is required to submit itself, not only to the aims and intentions of the group, but to the 'ways of thinking (*kangaekata*)' and 'ways of doing (*shikata*)' of 'the group (*shuudan, dantai*)'. This was most dramatically expressed to me by Yamazaki-san: "The image I have of the group (*shuudan*) means the complete erasure of the individual (*kojin to iu mono wa kanzen ni nakutatte shimau no wa shuudan da to iu imeiji wa watashi motteimasu*)". Ozawa-san, also had strong words to say:

> This is the kind of society in which if you try to express yourself and you manage to, you will be crushed (*jibun no kojin to iu mono wo dasou to suru to hatasereba tsubusareru*

[9] In (Western) psychoanalytic theory, a child accommodates parental need through a process of learning to consciously hide their 'true self' by 'denying' their own feelings and emotions, a process which becomes subconscious. Miller (1979) describes this phenomenon of a denied 'true' self and a 'false' self which conforms to parental desires, as the child's 'true self' killed. The expression *jibun wo korosu* suggests a conscious cultural recognition in Japan that a similar process is programmatically pursued through socialization. The important difference with 'Western' psychoanalytic theory, of course, is that 'killing the self', as a cultural norm in Japan, is a norm, not a pathological condition. And the important similarity is that a similar concept of a 'true self' would seem to exist in both 'Japanese' and 'Western' concepts of the individual self.

[10] I present a thesis for a resolution of this apparent contradiction in the concluding chapter.

*shakai de*). It is a very difficult society to live in for me. I was born in Japan and grew up here, but I have had a taste of the life in America, and the culture shock of when I returned... I got seriously ill once. This country is a difficult place to develop one's personality (*paasonariti*), but this company allows me to express my opinions to a certain degree and that is why I work here.

Changes in perceptions of individuality and in how individuality is regarded is the second theme which emerges from my conversations with the employees of GA. When describing the organisational structure of GA, Yamada-san made a distinction between 'groups' and 'individuals working together':

> With this company, rather than doing things in groups (*shuudan de*), work is achieved through the abilities of individuals working together (*kojin kojin no nõryoku ni õjite shigoto suru to iu yarikata*). There is not really a groupism feeling here, I think (*shuudan shugi to iu kanji de wa nai to omoimasu kedo*).

Matsubara-san also described a shift in emphasis:

> We don't really talk in terms of groups, but of individuals, so there is a feeling of separateness as well (*kaisha wa kanari shuudan goto ga kojinteki ni natte kiteiru kara. Dakara wakareteiru yõ na kanji mo shimasu*)".

This was also the opinion of Hashimoto-san, chief (*buchõ*) of the general affairs (*sõmu*) department:

> Behaviour where, for example, all employees take part in company trips, such as Cherry Blossom Viewing (*Ohanami*), or the like, where everyone unanimously follows the superiors, follows the same behaviour and performs the festivity in a group (*dantai*). This is what I see as a 'group (*shuudan*)'. *Shuudan shugi, dantai shugi* means being coerced into a single way of thinking. In places like GA, such trips are individual (*kojin*), for example, people go in small numbers to a place of their choice, it's just that the company pays for it. We have done it here in this unrestrained way, where the company is a common interest. Here, *shuudanshugi* has completely collapsed, or has been destroyed, rather. I think we are ahead here.

There is a clear shift way from a perception of 'working in groups (*shuudan de*) to 'individuals working together (*kojin kojin...to iu yarikata*)'. *Nakama* is also perceived to be unsuitable, and it is reasonable to conjecture that this is for the same reasons: an emphasis on individuals and the legitimation of the expression of individuality. When discussing *nakama* with me, Sakamoto-san said: "I have never used it in GA. We rather use 'work team' (*waaku chiimu*), or 'team', instead. *Nakama* is not quite the way I feel about it". Many of the employees said they do not use the word *nakama*, which, together with the fact that a number of the employees said they do not regard the word 'group' (*shuudan* or *dantai*) as suitable to describe collective selves at GA, suggests a qualitative shift in both the structure of groups at GA and the employees' perception of them.

In addition to many, although not all, employees at GA regarding *shuudan* and *nakama* as unsuitable words to describe work teams, or the company, the employees use of the word *tanin*, meaning various kinds of 'others', also indicates how perceptions of selves, both individual and collective are changing. *Tanin* has been explained as 'strangers' - people Ego doesn't know (Kuwayama 1992; Lebra 1992). Both Lebra and Kuwayama also regard *tanin* as the unknown 'third person' who Ego often regards as constituting *seken*, but according to my data, *tanin* are simply

regarded as persons other than Ego, known and unknown, by some of the employees. Ozawa-san replied: "Everyone is *tanin*. We are just colleagues. We lead our lives in the same place, but everyone is *tanin*". Inoue-san sought qualification when I asked her if there were any *tanin* in GA[11]: "Do you mean people from other companies, people who are not my friends, or people I don't know? I asked her to interpret the question herself, to which she replied: " People I have nothing to do with (*kakawatta no nai hito*). There are people here at GA whom I only acknowledge in passing (*aisatsu shita koto aru gurai shikanai hito wa imasu*)". The point I want to make is that *uchi*-ness is much less pronounced at GA than might have been expected. With the emphasis shifting towards individuals, so a sense of 'inside' and 'outside', of 'us' and 'them' diminishes, as the self begins to interact, not as an extension of a group of collective selves, through 'affiliation (*shozoku/zoku suru*), but as an individual self (*kojin kojin de*). The lack of any mention of '*uchi*- this', '*warewware* , 'we'-that', in any of the conversations or the quotes I have used through this and the preceding chapter, is, I believe, significant, and accords with the way selves, both collective and individual are being redefined within GA.

At the same time that individuality and individuals are being emphasised, an understanding of the need to 'fit in' or to live and work in groups is not challenged by the employees. This was expressed clearly by Matsubara-san in response to a question about her wishes for the future of Japan:[12]

> The Japanese should learn to be more well-mannered. For example, doing as one pleases. At work, people should ask themselves what is best? Certainly people have their own ideas about what they think and what they want to do, but we can't only do what we want. Those around us should also learn to ask themselves what's best for everyone.

Taking other's opinions into account, and being encouraged to develop one's individuality and participate in the decision-making process, are not inimical. The employees at GA all believe that individuals need to be among others, not simply to be productive, but in order to survive. The importance of community to the employees at GA remains noticeably high, and indicates that the encouraging and legitimating of individuality, as well as privileging individuals does not involve, or imply, a lessening of a sense of community, nor a belief that the importance of community is diminished as a result. As Sakamoto-san told me, in answer to the question 'what are the good and bad points of the individual (*kojin*)?':[13] "The bad side is that *kojin* cannot live on its own, but *kojin* itself is a good thing". Inoue-san similarly described the interdependency of individual and group: "*Kojin* is a single human being. Things that one person can't do can be done in a group. Strength is increased. Nobody can live on their own, so we live together". Hiwata-san, regards groups positively, as: "a situation whereby I am able to realise my personal dreams through work (*watashi no kangae wa shigoto wo tsuujite jibun no yume wo jitsugen saseru tame no ba to kangaete imasu*)". For Hiwata-san, the group (*shuudan*) is a place where the individual has to deny their self, but it is also a place where the self is able to flourish:

---

[11] *GA de wa tanin ga imasu ka. dare desu ka, naze tanin no desu ka*

[12] *Shōrai no nihon no koto de wa donna kibō ga arimasuka*

[13] *Kojin no yoi men to warui men wa nan desu ka*

> A group is a stage for achieving particular goals. Individuals achieve these goals, and there are many ways of doing so, aiming at our particular goals, dreaming our own dreams, wanting to make our opportunities within these arrangements (*jibun no suki wo kō iu fuu ni agetai*). The place to achieve these things is in a group (*sore wo jikkō suru ba ga group toka shuudan de aru to omou n*). Yet the group has objectives, so individuals cannot just do what they want (*mokuteki wa arimasukara jibun katte yaru koto to iu ja nai*). The objective of the group is the same for everyone.

There has been a fundamental shift from *kojin* and individuality being perceived and regarded negatively, to being perceived and regarded positively. This new individuality is not about selfishness and chaos, but about advocacy, responsibility, and working together. Muroya-san regards an individual as a person who is able to assert themselves and has a degree of advocacy (*shuuchō*). Wada-san described *kojin* as a person who is able to do something by themselves, but is required to take responsibility. Placing advocacy and responsibility in individuals, and then asking them to come together in a common purpose is how the relationship between individual and community is being redefined in GA.

*******

### 4.4) *Seken* and The New Individualism

In the previous section, I discussed the relationship between individual selves and collective selves, emphasising how they mutually constitute each other and are defined in terms of each other. However, the various types of collective selves that I discussed are 'membership' groups. Membership groups can be apprehended objectively. That is to say, it is possible for persons other than Ego to confirm the existence of Ego's membership group, and Ego's membership of it. Another defining characteristic of a membership group, is that it is possible for Ego, potentially, to meet and to know every member of the membership group. GA has a workforce of about one hundred and thirty employees. They all know that they are members of GA, and they can, individually, easily confirm who all the members are. Also, a third party can objectively confirm who is a member of GA and who is not. Likewise, a family is a membership group. It is usually quite straightforward to confirm who is a member of the family and who isn't. It was this kind of collectivity of selves, this kind of group, that I have been discussing so far. A membership group is the generic term for this kind of objectively verifiable group. 'Affiliated group (*shozoku shuudan*)' is a particular kind of membership group, where membership is through 'affiliation (*shozoku suru / zoku suru*)'. I discuss the particular characteristics of 'affiliation (*shozoku / zoku*)' in 7.1, but for moment will proceed by turning to discuss another type of collective self relevant to my argument: the reference group, what Inoue (1977) calls *junkyo shuudan*.[14]

In 1.2 I introduced to concept of reference groups, and referred to Shibutani (1968) to provide a definitive meaning for the term. To briefly recap, Shibutani settled on the following: "A reference group [is] any collectivity, real or imagined, envied or despised, whose perspective is assumed by the actor [and] whose perspective constitutes the frame of reference of the actor" (Shibutani 1968: 105). *Seken* is generally regarded as a reference group, although Abe regards it as both a reference group and an affiliated group (Abe 1994: 59). The major difference between the characteristics of a membership group and a reference group is that, whereas a membership group can be objectively verified and will conform to the subjective verification of any of the members, a reference group is purely subjective (Inoue 1977). Inoue makes the distinction as follows:

> Even if a number of us are affiliated to exactly the same group, the extent to which we individually feel a member of that group is different for every one of us. For all members respectively, there are differences in attitudes and actions within the accepted limits for actions and attitudes within the affiliated group. The group thing [*shuudan no koto*] on which we rely to authorize our individual actions and attitudes is called the reference group [*junkyo shuudan*]. *Junkyo shuudan* is something which is totally subjective (*Inoue 1977: 70. my translation*).

Inoue (1977) regards *seken* as a reference group, but one which is contiguous to an individual's affiliated group, to an extent that it can be so, given his description above. Kuwayama (1992) and Lebra (1992) regard *seken* as a reference group in this way, which is made visible through the *sekentei* of individuals. *Sekentei*, literally 'the appearance, or form, of *seken*', is described by Lebra (1992) as

[14] *Junkyo* translates as 'conformity' to customs or to law. *Kenkyusha New Japanese-English Dictionary 5th edition.*

'the presentational self': "a face-sensitive self which is addressed to *seken*". (Lebra 1992: 107).

Although Inoue, Kuwayama, and Lebra, regard *seken* as a reference group, Abe (1994) regards *seken* as an affiliated group. Abe tells us that *seken* is a network of personal relationships based on the fact that everybody 'knows each other by sight (*kao mishiri no kankei*)' (Abe 1994: 59). However, Abe agrees with Inoue in that what constitutes *seken* is very subjective. He rather eliptically comments: "If we say there are certain standards which are associated with *seken*, one of them is that everybody has their own standards (*seken to iu mono ni tsuite no kijun ga aru ka to ieba, minna sorezore ni kijun ga arimasu*)" (Abe 1994: 60). Inoue conveys the same sense of the tangible and the intangible:

> *Seken* is not a regulated (*kitei suru*) objectively standardised space. It is subjective to individuals, one by one. *Seken* is a force, a power (*ikioi*), something which cannot be anything other than vague and ambiguous (*bakuzen toshita aimai na mono to narazaru wo enai de arou*). Strictly speaking, it is hard to see *seken* as anything other than a number of individuals. However, in spite of that, when we perceive *seken* as a reference group (*junkyo shuudan*), we can know *seken* as something that has a particular structure (*Inoue 1977: 71. my translation*).

Reference group and affiliated group, can, and do, coincide and overlap. Inoue (1977) and Lebra (1992) both make this point. Lebra through her examples of *seken*:

> The *seken* constituency varies in accordance to where self happens to stand...It may include one's kindred (outside the immediate family), neighbours, schoolmates, colleagues, clientele, or a large ill-defined aggregate of people, known and unknown to self (*Lebra 1992: 107*).

The interdependence of individual self and collective selves in defining and constructing each other is evident in the relationship between *seken* and *sekentei*. The relationship between *seken* and an individual's *sekentei*, as theorized in much of the work on *seken*, mirrors the relationship between individual (*kojin*) and group (*shuudan*) expressed by the employees in **4.3**, and is again reminiscent of the various group models outlined by Befu (1980a, 1980b, 1990). That is to say, the individual is expected to conform to uniform ways of thinking and ways of doing set at the level of the collective self and enforced by individuals policing each other. Indeed, as I suggested in **4.3**, it is the existence of *seken* and how it is perceived by Japanese, which has given us this generalised understanding of the relationship between individuals and groups in Japan. Any remaking or redefinition of individual selves, collective selves, and the relationship between them is likely to alter how and from where *seken* is perceived, and how and from where *sekentei* is referenced. Following on from this, any redefinition of *seken* or of the relationship between *seken* and *sekentei*, should conform to the reconfigured relationship between individual and community. As will become apparent, however, like *shuudan* and *nakama*, *seken* is regarded as a specific type of reference group by the employees at GA.

Inoue (1977), in his introduction, describes the feeling that many of the interviewees at GA had about *seken* and *sekentei*:

> What we call *sekentei*, today, generally speaking, is something 'old' to be steered clear of. Especially since the war, there are many who deny its existence, considering it to be something feudalistic [*hōkenteki na mono toshite*]. *Sekentei* is unilaterally renounced by these people as something old and bad which it is advisable to reject and deny. In reality, though, it should not be denied that *sekentei* is something which controls, to some considerable extent, the actions [*kōdō*] and the consciousness [*ishiki*] of the people of this country [*wagakuni no hito bito*]...To look at it from a different angle, if I look back at myself, I feel as if *sekentei* is completely and utterly a part of me. Once, I stubbornly and persistently tried to act and judge subjectively. However, after such an occasion, when I thought about it carefully, I would, aghast, suddenly find myself exposed by *sekentei* (*Inoue 1977: iii. my translation*).

Inoue's description of *sekentei* as something which controls to some considerable extent the actions and consciousness of the Japanese people, accords with Abe's (1994) comments (1.3) that 'day-to-day living' for the Japanese falls under the dictates of *seken*, not the 'false facade' of a poorly constituted Civil Society.

Lebra's (1992) description of *seken*, stressing its sanctioning power, its oppressiveness, the manner in which it: "surround[s] the self in an inescapable way...[which]...makes the self especially vulnerable" (Lebra 1992: 106), is the popular view of *seken*, and conforms with Inoue's point above, that most Japanese regard *seken* is 'old' and 'something to be steered clear of'. The response of the employees to my questions about *seken* suggested that some of them initially thought the questions irrelevant to GA, a young, successful company with a different kind of philosophy and working practices to those associated with all-seeing eyes and ears, and pressures to conform.

Technology has also engendered the transformation of the boundaries of *seken*, from village or *dainyō*'s court in the late Tokugawa period, to a space which is much larger. *Seken* is present, through TV, radio, in magazines and newspapers, logged onto on the Internet, happened upon in the imagination, encountered as a result of the development of railways, the car, air travel, and space travel. Before the kinds of changes which are being implemented at GA were introduced, technology has been extending the boundaries of *seken* beyond an individual's affiliated groups. When Abe (1994) says that *seken* is a network of personal relationships based on the fact that everybody knows each other by sight (*kao mishiri no kankei*), I at first thought this a far too restricted definition. But if we substitute 'recognise' for 'knows', then we can say that a relationship exists between individuals who share the same values and attitudes, even if they haven't met. They 'see', 'hear' and 'gossip' about each other via satellites and in cyberspace, as well as in bars and on street corners, as has always been the case. Members of a collective self such as this will congregate at certain times in certain designated places, even if they are not all in the same city, in the same country, or in the same time zone. They will recognise each other in the street by their dress, and although they may not even acknowledge each other, they will register one of their number. There will be dissimilarities which each may register as *sekentei* addressed to a myriad number of different *seken*, a different matrix of rehearsed and unconscious thoughts and actions which constitute the self.

Inoue (1977), after evoking the vagueness and ambiguity of *seken*, also suggests that: "Strictly speaking, it is hard to imagine *seken* as anything more than a number of individuals (*kibishiku ieba kojin no sou dake seken ga aru to iu koto no sura narikanenai*)" (Inoue 1977: 71). Again, although this initially seemed unsatisfactory to me, *seken* does reside in individuals and is made visible through their *sekentei*. In this way, *seken* can possibly be viewed as a kind of affiliated group, especially when individuals who associate themselves with a particular set of values and attitudes, come together and form affiliated groups through common *seken*, at which point they can be recognised and 'known' objectively, if not exhaustively.

Plath (1989) does not mention *seken* in his discussion of lifecourses in Japan within a framework of 'arcs, circles, and spheres', but *seken* is evident in his description of 'circles':

> A person has to 'find himself' socially by integrating his circle, taking evaluations and demands put upon him by his partners and bringing them into a workable coordination...As an 'institution', a circle is a

> personalised institution...It is not a corporate institution like an *ie* or like Mitsui Shōji. It has no table of organisation, no origin myth...A person must continue to nurture his circle if it is to continue nurturing him. To be able to do this he must cultivate social skills that are not given at birth. He must acquire the ability to care for others in terms of what they need, not just selfishly in terms of what he wants...So the self must not only gain in emotional capacity for caring, it must also gain in cognitive capacity for judging. It must understand the arcs of social chronology and where people fit into them. In a word, the self must mature in dependability (*Plath 1989: 80*).

Ultimately, it may the subjectivity of *sekentei* that defines *seken* as a reference group, but recognition of and respect for individual subjectivity is not a characteristic of *seken*. Quite the opposite. Uniformity, conformity, and the sense that any deviation will be noticed by, causing 'bother (*meiwaku*)' to: "a large ill-defined aggregate of people, known and unknown to self" (Lebra 1992: 107), are what *seken* is known by. Inoue (1977) tells us that no one individual associates themselves with the same combination of references as another individual, and we can say that all references are continually remade and redefined as individuals encounter each other, but in a collective self where the individual self is expected to 'suppress their self (*kojin wo narubeku osaeru*)' or 'deny their self (*jibun wo korosu*)', all members of that group are likely to be very aware of *seken* and careful about their *sekentei*, denying subjective difference and seeking to impose conformity and uniformity on themselves and all the other members.

*******

I began my discussions on *seken* and *sekentei* with the employees at GA, by asking for their thoughts on what they regarded as *seken nami* (conforming to *seken* standards) within GA. [15] We are able to get an idea of the conventions of a given *seken*, through those things which are regarded either to conform to *seken* standards, or to vary in some way or another. Lebra describes how a person or action is defined by relation to a given *seken*: "*seken nami* (conformative to *seken* standard, or ordinary), *seken banare* (incongruent with *seken* convention, or eccentric), *seken shirazu* (unaware of *seken* rules, or naive)" (Lebra 1992: 107). Yet what is described as either 'ordinary', 'eccentric' or 'naive', has moral significance. *Seken nami* is not simply 'standard' or 'ordinary', but is also 'correct', 'right', or 'good', which gives *seken* its moral weight and its sanctioning and coercive power, and which motivates its constituency to maximize its/their interests. Ozawa-san described this well, talking about *sekentei*, the sense of self that responds to a given *seken nami* standard: "I don't really pay much attention to it. Although, when I say that you might get an impression that I live my life ignoring *sekentei*. There is a general level that other people have [*seken nami* standards], what everyone considers the right way of doing things... to some extent, a typical Japanese style, although that may be a strange way of putting it. For example, "This is the done thing, You!" (with irritation in her voice) or "People are...". That exists. But I don't pay much attention to it, so I can't put it in better words".

My question about *seken nami* standards in GA was open to interpretation because I asked about *seken nami* within the context of GA. Therefore some people interpreted the question to refer to *seken nami* standards within the company, as a membership group, while others interpreted the

[15] *GA no han'i no naka de wa seken nami to iu koto wa nan desu ka*

question as referring to GA as part of a larger, reference group community, either based on users, clients and other individuals and communities connected to GA in various ways, or as a community of companies competing in the same industry. Yamada-san took my question as referring to *seken nami* in this broader sense, and replied: "*Seken nami* in terms of GA refers to the place of GA among our competitors". A possible reason why Yamada-san interpreted my question in the way he did is because he sees GA as being part of a particular *seken*, but does not see GA itself as a particular *seken*. Wada-san and Ozawa-san wondered if salary might be regarded as *seken nami*, although neither was sure. Both were talking about GA alone, not in the broader sense like Yamada-san. Hiwata-san was also thinking along similar lines when he commented: "Company rules and regulations are *seken nami*, possibly". Hiwata-san's hesitation as to whether company rules and regulations are *seken nami* indicates that the employees are aware that GA as a membership group is not a unified reference group. Muroya-san confirmed as much, also indicating how *seken nami* refers, not to rules and regulations, as Hiwata-san wondered, but to the conventional:

> We are not expected to think in a certain way, or do things in a certain way. We are expected to express our selves (*jibun wo dasu*), and to develop our ideas. Maybe that is *seken nami*!

Implicit in Muroya-san's semi-serious remark is the requirement that a value can only be *seken nami* if it is binding on all members. Matsubara-san, however, suggests that even though the employees' reference groups have fragmented and diversified, they can still be regarded as *seken nami* standards:

> Ordinarily, it's what is generally thought by most people. As far as *seken nami* in GA is concerned, nobody thinks that everybody should have the same opinion. However, one person thinks that *seken nami* is one thing, and another person thinks it is something else, so for each person, *seken nami* is what is normal for them. So, on that basis, I'd say there is no consensus (*jōshiki*) within GA: there is no sense of uniformity.

Even though Matsubara-san suggests that the employee's perceive 'what is normal for them' as *seken nami* standards, because there is no consciousness of *seken* within the company and because the employees also do not feel they have to take care of *sekentei* within the company, it follows that *seken nami* standards will also be perceived to be absent. This was suggested by Iwata-san, when he said:

> Within the context of GA, there isn't really any consciousness in people (*jibun de ishiki shita*) of *seken nami*-like fixed, defined standards. We are given the minimum of instructions to enable us to carry out our work. Generally, those minimal instructions are what we aim at. Because we are expected to be individuals (*kojin wo narubeku dasu*), there isn't really any consciousness of "this being *seken nami*", and "that not being *seken nami*.

Within GA, the emphasis on individuals (*kojin*) and individuality (*kojin wo dasu / jibun wo dasu*) has resulted in the employees feeling that there are no *seken nami* standards in GA, due to a diversification and multiplication of reference groups, a consequence of not being required to conform (*awaseru*), due to the workplace ethic at GA of 'expressing one's self (*kojin wo narubeku dasu*)', in Muroya-san's words, rather than 'suppressing one's self (*kojin wo narubeku osaeru*)', as Matsubara-san described how a person should act in a 'group (*shuudan*)'.

The feeling of being watched or listened to, or of feeling vulnerable, which Lebra described, is not conveyed by the employees. Lebra's evocation is more in keeping with Abe's description of *seken* being structured by age-seniority, gift-giving, and 'mutual compensation' (1.3). A feeling of needing to conform to what Hashimoto-san referred to as 'fixed, defined *seken nami* standards' is clearly a defining characteristic of *seken*. Further indicating that perception of *seken* is contingent on membership group structure, many of the employees commented that awareness of *seken nami* standards increased when they were outside GA. Sakamoto-san made it very clear: "It depends on the situation. Inside the company we don't pay attention to *sekentei*, but when even a little away from the company it becomes very important".

Opinions and feelings about *seken* and *sekentei* followed a similar pattern to the employee's sense of *seken nami* standards within the company: there was no feeling of *seken* in the company among most of the employees. Iwata-san contrasted GA to other companies on the basis of *seken*, indicating that companies, as affiliated groups (*shozoku shuudan*), do act as powerful reference groups:

> No, we do not have to be careful about general appearance (*ippanteki na sekentei*). As a member of GA, there are general things such as courtesy and politeness, *reigi*, and *aisatsu*, but we do not have to be careful about these things. There are morals which every individual, as a member of society, has within them, but which are different for every person. Within society there are established, defined, morals, but everybody has their own consciousness of them, this is not *sekentei*. Other companies are different from GA, and you will hear "You have to do things this way", something associated with *seken*, which you won't find here.

A lack of a sense of *seken*, of *sekentei*, and of *seken nami* standards seems to accompany the acknowledgment and recognition of difference which the encouragement and recognition of individuality entails. Only Yamada-san and Hashimoto-san felt the presence of *seken* in GA, but only when dealing with persons with whom the company does business. Neither of them perceive GA as *seken*, but both of them have the perception that GA is part of a wider community which is *seken*:

> Generally, I don't use the word *seken*. However, I'll give you an example. Something like those people who use our products, among which there is the air that we are somehow being evaluated (*hyōka sarete tsukate itadakeru*). In this kind of situation, the feeling of *seken* is naturally present" (Yamada-san).

Hashimoto-san described a similar feeling:

> There is none of that *ōyake* here".[16] However, all those who, for example, have to deal with formal situations, like I mentioned before, we in the general affairs division deal with banks, where we have to respond in a formal way... That is where *sekentei* comes in. We may apply various *sekentei*, i.e. talk to the bank in a nice way. We don't invent things about the actual state of affairs, but we can talk in a roundabout way by making our tone lighter or heavier. We do embellish, or put things in a certain way. In my view, the essence of *sekentei* is the desire to be seen in a positive light. In other words, the desire to not be seen as strange by other people [*seken banare*]. In order to achieve this, the reality can be tarted up in various ways, so the negative things can be played down (*yokunai koto to wakaritsutsu*). This way of talking can help things go smoothly, and it is still the truth .

[16] See 1.3

Hashimoto-san indicates that the mobilisation of *sekentei* is a conscious act which Ego has control over. So conscious, in fact, he suggests an individual can cast his or her mind over a selection of 'presentational selves' (Lebra 1992) and select what s/he considers the most suitable. Such a consciousness suggests that success in negotiating one's environment is reflected in, and made possible by, an individual's ability to negotiate and manipulate *seken* through their *sekentei*, requiring a good knowledge of *seken nami* standards within that given *seken*. Conceptions of personhood and maturity, then, are likely to be closely linked to an individual's ability to recognise *seken*, mobilise their *sekentei* and meet *seken nami* standards. The fact that *seken*, *sekentei*, and *seken nami* standards are not felt to be present in GA indicates that different conceptions of personhood are acknowledged and legitimate within the company, which we know to be the case, and on a very fundamental level: persons are expected to express themselves, not suppress themselves, and are expected to respect difference, not enforce conformity.

Uniformity does seem to exist, however, in the feeling that rises in the individual when their *sekentei* is aroused, a feeling that is tangible physically and which characterises a person's *sekentei*, regardless of situation. Inoue (1977) notes in his introduction, which I quoted above, how *sekentei* was:

> completely and utterly a part of me. Once I stubbornly and persistently tried to act and judge subjectively. However, after such an occasion, when I thought about it carefully, I would, aghast, suddenly find myself exposed by *sekentei*" (*Inoue 1977: iii. my translation*).

Sensitivity to *seken* is not put on and taken off like a cloak, as Inoue powerfully describes. However, some people are more sensitive than others, and nobody responds to a given *seken nami* standard in exactly the same way. Muroya-san took the time to try and describe what is clearly a difficult thing to put into words:

> *Sekentei*... Hmmm.. that's difficult. You could say it's a kind of feeling, a sensibility (*kankaku*)...Having the same sensibilities as others...especially, when something different seems unpleasant or unacceptable (*mazui*), that kind of thing. Living a normal life (*futsuu ni ikiru*) is not opposing *seken*, although it is my nature to be stubborn!
>
> **Is sekentei a part of today's Japan?**
>
> Yes, I think so.
>
> **Does sekentei change when you move from one setting to another?**
>
> For me it's roughly the same, because it is the same feeling even though the situations may be different. *Sekentei* is not something I think about, or are conscious of doing, it's something that comes from gut feeling (*kankaku kara shite*). Whether at work, with my friends, or anywhere else, that feeling is the same...For example, in front of friends, relaxing, or being more formal at work, the *sekentei* feeling of "I should do this here", or "I should do that there", is present. I don't think about it especially, it's unconscious (*ishiki shinai de yateiru mon*) but there is that same feeling all the time.

Lebra (1992), also notes that *sekentei* makes itself felt emotionally:

> Even today, my female informants, if unmarried in their late twenties or older, tend to confess that they are eager to marry, not because they really want spouses but because their *sekentei* hurts (*sekentei ga warui*). They wish, in other words, to appear *seken nami* (*Lebra 1992: 107*).

*Sekentei*, then, is regarded as both a 'feeling (*kankaku*)' and as an act. Hashimoto-san refers to *sekentei* in these two ways. He first indicates that there are 'various *sekentei*', which can be applied premeditatively, therefore consciously as an act, and also describes *sekentei* as a 'desire to be seen positively...to not be seen as strange by other people', which sounds like the kind of unconscious 'sensibility (*kankaku kara shite*)' which Muroya-san reported, and which Inoue and Lebra noted. Clearly, there is a connection between the two descriptions: a desire to be viewed positively would reasonably be expected to spur an individual to act consciously in order to satisfy that desire. But is *sekentei* the desire, the act, or both? The sense of *sekentei* as a desire accords with Muroya-san's description of the feeling 'I should do this here, I should do that there'. Yamada-san is unclear on this point, and we can interpret his answer as being both desire and act. Referring to a customer having a problem with a GA product, he said: "for me, *sekentei* is to respond to that problem as quickly as possible". Whether *sekentei* is the desire to respond to that problem, or is the response itself is unclear, but we can certainly interpret Yamada-san's description to mean both, which would be consistent with Hashimoto-san. Wada-san's description of *sekentei* also refers to the act:

> Maybe, if we take a salaryman as an example, and the air that a particular kind of necktie, a white shirt, a suit, gives. That kind of appearance (*yõshi*). That kind of business-like thing. That is *sekentei*.

Wada-san focuses on 'the air a particular kind of...gives', and on 'appearance (*yõshi*)'. Whether a particular person has a desire to dress in a particular way or act in a particular way, or whether they feel coerced would seem to be unimportant, depending as it would as much on how a person feels on a particular day. *Sekentei* is all about presentation, but there is clearly a feeling prior to the act which is also regarded as *sekentei*.

Yamazaki-san makes a common observation regarding *sekentei*: that it is something on the surface and not something 'inside'. The moral provision of *seken* and the need to conform is also evident in his comment when he says 'you have to act a certain way....you have to be this or that':

> *Sekentei* is, for example, the surface seen from outside. It strikes me as an image created not on the basis of what is inside, not on the inner part, but solely on what can be seen from outside. For example, you have to be this or that. You have to act a certain way, whenever anyone looks at you. Things that have nothing to do with what you actually do, in terms of work, for example. *Sekentei* is concerned with such things.

As Lebra notes, Japanese people have long conceived of an 'inner self' and an 'outer self' (Lebra: 1992), and Yamazaki-san's comments lead us to consider the relationship between *kokoro*, the essence of the 'inner self', and *sekentei*, the essence of the 'outer self'. I have reservations about any conception of the individual self which does not conceive the self as primarily unitary, and explains how this unitary self exists-in-the-world. But Japanese do conceive of the individual self as comprised of an 'inner self' and an 'outer self'. And the concept of an individual self whose individuality is recognised and acknowledged which is beginning to emerge in the examples of GA and underground dance music Techno parties, is best understood when described in terms of a departure from this 'inner self/ outer self' conception of the self.

I want to begin by considering the relationship between *jibun*, *kojin*, *kosei* and *sekentei*, and

then *jibun, kojin, kosei* and *kokoro*. I have already noted[17] that the employees used the terms *jibun* and *kojin* interchangeably to refer to an individual self. *Jibun*, which means 'oneself' was used primarily to refer to the individual self in the first person. *Kojin*, which means an 'individual human being' was used primarily to refer to the individual self in the third person, but both were used to refer to Ego as the individual self in a cognitive sense. For example 'to suppress oneself (*kojin wo osaeru*)' and 'to deny oneself (*jibun wo korosu*)' both refer to the expectation that an individual will submit to the 'ways of thinking (*kangaekata*)' and 'ways of doing (*shikata*)' of a 'group (*shuudan*). *Kosei* is 'individuality', and was used interchangeably with *jibun*. For example, in the expression 'to express oneself (*kosei wo dasu* or *jibun wo dasu*)'. Consequently, *jibun, kojin,* and *kosei* all refer to one's 'self' or Ego as a cognitive sense, what Abe (1994) calls *jikō*.

The relationship between this sense of self and *sekentei* was revealed by the employees during the discussions concerning the relationship between an 'individual (*kojin*)' and 'group (*shuudan*)' (4.3). Matsubara-san said that an individual is expected to 'suppress itself (*kojin wo osaeru*)' when it enters a group (*shuudan*). Iwata-san used the phrase 'to deny the self (*jibun wo korosu*)'. Muroya-san described an individual (*kojin*) in the following way: "Being an individual means being able to stretch yourself (*nobite iku*) and have a degree of advocacy (*shuuchō*). However, this is a country where you cannot assert yourself (*kono kuni tte shuuchō dekinai kuni nan desu yo*)". Ozawa-san also: 'This is the kind of society in which if you try and express yourself, you will be crushed (*jibun no kojin to iu mono wo dasou to suru to hatasereba tsubusareru shakai de*)". The other employees all described the relationship between the individual self and a 'group (*shuudan*)' in similar terms. Iwata-san described how Ego is likely to 'lose their self (*jibun wo magirareru*)' in a group (*shuudan*). The ethics of this particular conception of a collective self, and the relationship between persons which constitute it, refine the various group models discussed by Befu (1990). In addition, it is also clear that the relationship between a person's *sekentei* and a given *seken* is reminiscent of the Group Model which was the subject of Befu's first critique (1980a). Whether the employees are talking about individual selves and collective selves using the terms *kojin* or *jibun* and *shuudan*, or *sekentei* and *seken*, the individual is expected to conform to uniform ways of thinking and doing set at the level of the collective self and enforced by individuals policing each other. There would appear to be a clear connection between 'suppressing the self' or 'denying the self' and 'presenting (lit. 'making') *sekentei* (*sekentei wo tsukurou*)', and between 'expressing the self' and an absence of the feeling of needing to 'make *sekentei*', to the point that we could possibly say that the individual suppresses its self by the act of mobilizing *sekentei*.

Moeran (1989) told us that *kokoro* is the wellspring of the potter's individuality (*kosei*), and that although the key role of *kokoro* in the creative process was well understood by all concerned in the community, it was necessary to downplay the importance of *kokoro* and *kosei* in the production of pots, achieved through various communal (*seken nami*) practices and restrictive aesthetic standards set at the collective level, which are presented as more important than individual talent in producing the pots. This privileging of the collective effort over the individual effort, as well as de-emphasising individual talent through practices and an aesthetics which privilege community, is an example of

[17]See footnote 5

*kosei*, as *kokoro* being carefully circumscribed: essentially, suppressed.

The word *kokoro* was only mentioned once, by Iwata-san, in any of the employee's descriptions of how the self should 'suppress it self' in a 'group (*shuudan*)', or when describing how the self should express itself in a collective self which privileges the individual self, such as GA. This was Iwata-san remarking that being in a group (*shuudan*)' involves a 'divergence (*tashõ no jibun no kokoro no zure*)' from one's *kokoro*. Nevertheless, we can fruitfully proceed for now. *Kokoro*, *kosei*, *jibun* and *kojin* are quite evidently very close, semantically, in this case, so even though we cannot say *jibun wo dasu* or *kosei wo dasu* means *kokoro wo dasu* at this stage, a brief consideration of *tatemae*, 'public behaviour', and *honne*, 'true feeling', two of Hendry's (1993) 'particular elements which characterise Japanese society', will allow us to say that 'presenting *sekentei* (*sekentei wo tsukurou*)' involves hiding *kokoro*. We can say this because, under the terms of a typical group model of Japanese society (Befu 1990), the individual self, in 'public behaviour (*tatemae*)' situations, is expected to hide their 'true feelings (*honne*)', which means hiding *kokoro* (Hendry 1993). The relationship between *kokoro* and *honne*, 'true feeling' has been widely written about, but no anthropologist who has written about *tatemae*, 'public behaviour, has discussed it in terms of *sekentei*. Nevertheless, the connection is clear: *sekentei* is 'public behaviour' in a given situation. Many of the employees at GA reported that the only place other than GA where they do not feel the need to be careful about their *sekentei* is in the family home with their wives and children, a *honne* setting.

Within a recognised *honne* situation, the individual self is expected to express their 'true feelings'. The employees at GA are also expected to express their true feelings, but in a public setting. The individual self at GA, in other words an individual self which constitutes a collective self that privileges the individual, appears to be a self in which the 'inner self' embodied by *kokoro*, and the 'outer self', a person's *sekentei*, is redefined and is conceived of as unitary. I leave it as 'appears to be' for now. My conclusions will have to wait until the party-goers have expressed their thoughts on the matter (7.1), but we can proceed a little further by considering how the conception of individual selves and collective selves within GA affects the mapping of social space mapped according to Hendry's (1993) 'particular elements', what Bachnik refers to as 'double co-ordinates [which] are pervasive in Japanese social life, appearing in virtually every sphere" (Bachnik 1992: 153). On the principle that individual selves and collective selves mutually constitute and define each other in Japan, we should see changes in the cognitive mapping of social space among the employees at GA which are consistent with the changes that are occurring to the conception of the individual self and collective self in GA.

*******

### 4.5) *Tatemae , Giri,* and The New Individualism

Hendry (1993) , isolates two 'principles' on which Japanese society is organised, which, she states, help to explain the existence of a number of oppositional distinctions which Japanese use to orientate themselves and negotiate their encounters with each other (Hendry 1993: 222). Hendry states that *tatemae* (public behaviour), *honne* (real feeling), *omote* ('front' or 'formal'), and *ura* ('back' or 'informal'), and *uchi* (inside) and *soto* (outside), are: "particular combinations of...elements [which] may be found in particular parts of Japanese society, and recognised as Japanese" (Hendry 1993: 226). She also states that: "The importance of these distinctions cannot be overemphasised in explaining features of Japanese society" (Hendry 1993: 46). I would also add *seken* and *sekentei* to this list of 'elements'. These elements and distinctions are major characteristics of the group models (Befu 1990), which still do explain much of the thought and action in Japanese society. However, in examples such as GA and other restructured companies, and increasingly in other post-Bubble settings, these elements and distinctions are being either redefined or conflated. The new individualism which is being encouraged in GA and which is developing in other settings in post-Bubble Japan cannot be explained, I will argue, using these 'particular combinations of elements' (Hendry 1993), or 'paired terms' (Tobin 1992).

The first principle which Hendry regards as fundamental in explaining the organisation of Japanese society, is hierarchy, whereby all members of a group are bound together in one-to-one vertical relationships (*cf.* Nakane 1970). Hendry's second principle is the existence of and belonging to *uchi* groups. Following from these two principles, Hendry, and many others, regard the distinctions between *tatemae* and *honne, omote* and *ura*, and *uchi* and *soto*, to be fundamental in characterising and explaining Japanese society. At GA, both Hendry's 'principles' have been virtually removed in the case of hierarchy, and radically redefined in the case of the employees' use of the term *uchi* groups.

Hierarchy has been removed through the creation of an organisational structure of the type described in 3.3. This structure, together with the exhortations of the president and his staff, encourages the employees to develop their individuality (*kosei*) and originality (*originarity*), and has led to the conflation of what has popularly been described as *tatemae*, 'public behaviour' or the 'facade of manners', and *honne*, 'uninhibited human feeling' or 'one's true feelings'. Speaking openly and honestly is regarded as part of the 'culturally appropriate sense of self' (Tobin 1992) within GA, which indicates that what is regarded as an appropriate sense of self in GA differs from that associated with Hendry's 'particular elements of Japanese society'. In Tobin's paper (Tobin 1992), he tells us that preschool children attending a daycare centre (*hoikuen*), are instructed in the ability to make distinctions between the paired terms of *omote* and *ura*, and *tatemae* and *honne*, preparing them for the society Hendry describes, based on various *uchi* groups organised hierarchically. Tobin writes:

> the ability to shift levels of intimacy and restraint learned in the inner circle of family relations as a toddler, is expanded during the pre-school years to include the larger circles of peers, teachers, and neighbours...On the road to adulthood, Japanese school children must learn lessons more complex than simply distinguishing inside from outside, front from back, public from private...[T]o have a proper two-tiered sense of Japanese self, one must learn to step back and forth across the gap...in the course of a single conversation, or indeed even in the midst of a single phrase (*Tobin 1992*: 24).

Following Doi (1986), Tobin regards the Japanese self as a two-tiered self, whereby the facility of being able to negotiate the two levels in any situation is a sign of adulthood or maturity. The two tiers would, strictly speaking, not be *omote* and *ura*, as Tobin suggests, but would be *omote muki* and *ura muki*, 'facing the front', or 'facing the back'. *Omote* and *ura*, cannot be aspects of self, for they are settings in which social action takes place. If we use the terms *omote muki* and *ura muki*, which Japanese do, we are only then discussing the orientation of Ego, of the self, with respect to Other.

Within GA also, all the employees are required to be able to negotiate any situation with elan, which requires the mobilisation of different knowledge in familiar situations. Matsubara-san described how this is sometimes difficult because the employees are not used to being open and honest in situations where they have been taught to be restrained and hide their opinions (3.5). What remains important in GA while the employees negotiate their new situations, as in other settings more associated with Hendry's 'particular elements', however, is the idea of *kejime* (Bachnik 1992, Tobin 1992, Hendry 1993): being able to distinguish between situations in order to act appropriately. The need to know how to act in a given situation, or in a given fleeting moment, is indicated by Tobin in the quote above, and is just as important in GA. In addition, the need to act accordingly in a given situation is not affected by the employees at GA speaking openly and honestly. At the same time, however, even if the terms *tatemae* and *honne* can still be usefully employed to explain action within GA, the idea of a two-tiered self cannot. The employees clearly do move between situations which can be explained, albeit very one-dimensionally, as a shift along a *tatemae / honne* continuum, but it is simply misleading and clearly unsatisfactory to talk of jumping between two selves "within the course of a single conversation, or indeed in the midst of a single phrase" (Tobin 1993: 24). Much in the same way that a theory of shifting, multiple selves is unsatisfactory because there is no sense of Japanese selves as anything other than cyphers, so a theory of a two-tiered self constantly flipping from one self to another conjures images of Tex Avery cartoon madness rather than individual selves negotiating social situations.

If a theory of a two-tiered self, where one tier effects *tatemae* and the other is *honne*, is unsatisfactory to describe the Japanese self, can the terms *tatemae* and *honne* be used to describe types of social action within GA? If the employees at GA are both speaking their minds and being polite, are they expressing *tatemae* and are they in an *omote* setting? Do we have to discard the idea of *tatemae* and *honne*, to explain social action within GA, or can we reconfigure them? Hendry suggests that whether *tatemae* or *honne* is being expressed is a question of levels of politeness expressed through grammatical forms (Hendry 1993). But she indicates that *tatemae* is not simply a case of speaking using grammatically polite language alone, but is also a case of what is said. The two are invariably linked, but an example I give in 5.3, in which a group of young school leavers and graduates were talking to some older salarymen in a TV debate, shows that *tatemae* is not solely, or even predominantly, about using reverential grammatical forms, but is very much to do with

content. The youths spoke grammatically very politely, but they were regarded as rude, and importantly, immature by the older men because they spoke their minds: they conveyed *honne*, even though they were polite.

*Tatemae* is generally regarded as restraint expressed in grammatically polite terms, and governed by a hierarchical arrangement of persons as explained by Hendry's 'particular elements'.[18] *Honne*, on the other hand, is described by Tobin (1992) as 'uninhibited expressions of human feeling', associated with *ura* (back room) settings and intimate *uchi* (inside) groups, such as family or friends, in the bi-polar two-tier model. The students I discuss in **5.3** express their feelings uninhibitedly (*honne*) in a formal (*omote*) setting, suggesting the youths hold different values to the older salarymen to whom they were talking, but similar values to the employees at GA. In GA, speaking openly and honestly in a formal meeting is only possible because the ethics and practices of the workplace at GA have been redefined. A departmental meeting at GA is quite different from departmental meetings in the kinds of companies studied by Dore (1973), Rohlen (1974), and Clark (1979), and described by Nakane (1970). Not only does the organisation of space in GA indicate equality, consistent with a flattened organisational structure, those present speak openly and honestly to each other as equals, not as intimates. If *honne* is associated with intimate relations, and *tatemae* with formal relations, we require a new set of terms to describe formal relations where the members regard each other as equal, each holding and expressing openly his or her own opinions and ideas. Setting is important, because both *tatemae* and *honne* are interactions characteristic of particular settings which are recognised and described, at least by anthropologists, namely *omote*, *ura*, *uchi*, and *soto*. If one party either ignores the conventions of the setting, or reads them differently, as in the case of the youths talking to the older salarymen, then harmony will be disrupted and there will be conflict. If the setting changes to sanction or encourage new 'forms of interaction (*sesshi kata*)', then we can expect social space to be mapped differently, and a different set of terms will be required to describe these spaces.

*******

Equality between the employees not only redefines *tatemae* and *honne* interactions, it removes any sense of *giri* in the company for most of the employees. A sense of *giri*, much like a sense of *seken* and *seken nami* standards, is very subjective. However, the response of the employees to my questions about *giri* indicates that the reconfiguring of human relationships within GA removes a sense of *giri* for the overwhelming majority of them. In **3.4** I described the emphatic responses of the employees to my questions about working late or having to go drinking with colleagues. What makes employees go drinking together after work, or staying late even if they themselves have no work to do, is a sense of *giri*, according to Hashimoto-san, which, like *tatemae* and *honne*, *omote* and *ura*, is a concept of human interaction associated with particular ethics and social organisation. As Hendry (1993) notes:

[18] *Tatemae* is also expressed through gesture and posture, and through position with the room or space relative to other persons present.

> [T]here are clear expectations of reciprocity in pairs of relationships, the most striking being the exchange of loyalty for benevolence between an inferior and superior in many different circumstances. This type of exchange may not be manifest in packets and parcels, but it is none the less binding. These rules may be discussed in terms of 'debts' (*giri* and *on*) (*Hendry 1993*: 224).

Many of the responses to my question, 'What is *giri*?'[19] are consistent with the description Hendry gives. Hendry's most distinctive point is that it is characteristic for *giri* to exist between two persons who are in a vertical one-to-one relationship: the principle of hierarchy. Smith (1983) when discussing *giri* describes similar conditions:

> *Giri* is a duty or obligation of a person to behave in certain loosely prescribed ways towards another, to whom the person is indebted. The content and scale of the duty or obligation vary greatly according to the relative hierarchical positions of the two parties, the nature of the debt and how it was incurred...Nevertheless, the burden on the incurrer of the obligation is the heavier of the two (*Smith 1983*: 45).

However, only Wada-san mentioned that *giri* is something which exists between a superior and an inferior, but nearly all the employees remarked that *giri* involves being tied to somebody, so that even when you do something for somebody, that is not the end of it:

> Appearance (*mie*) and these things are all included. It's being courteous in response to somebody doing something for you (*O sewa ni natta baai wa, sore ni taishite no reigi to imasu yo ne*). After somebody has done something for you, you return the favour, right? It's that kind of feeling. However, after you have returned the favour, with *giri* that isn't the end of it. And the way of returning that favour is also *giri*. Both are *giri*. The feeling that you have to return the favour, in other words, the sense of needing to do something in return is *giri*. This feeling expressed through action is to carry out *giri*. *Giri* itself is that very thought (Hashimoto-san).

The feeling Hashimoto-san is talking about is the feeling of *on*, of being indebted to a person. Iwata-san expressed the same feeling - of being tied to somebody:

> *Giri* involves a strong feeling of being tied to somebody or something. For example, when somebody helps you out, you have to settle things (*O sewa ni natta kara okaishō shinakereba ikenai*.).[20] When you receive an *on* from somebody, when the time comes to repay it in some way, whatever that thing is, you have to do it. Even if it involves you looking the other way in some way or another. That is the consciousness of *giri*.

Even though most of the employees do not specifically identify *giri* as primarily existing between persons of unequal position, there is the sense of being tied together which is characteristic of Hendry's hierarchically ordered *uchi* groups, or Nakane's (1970) inverted V structure. What constitutes repayment of *giri* is also dependent on the *seken nami* conventions of a given collective self, such as a company department or a 'faction (*habatsu*)'. Iwata tells us how *giri* can require a person to 'look the other way', in other words, fulfil the obligation to repay *giri* regardless of what the repayment is. A sense of 'us' and 'them' (*uchi* and *soto*) can only be heightened by the feelings of complicity which result from such trade-offs, and indeed, we only have to look to the collusion and complicity in the securities industry and the bureaucracy in the aftermath of the collapse of the Bubble, to see that *giri* is alive and well in Japan (1.3). *Giri* is also regarded as cold or 'superficial' (*hyōmenteki na tsukiai to iu*), or as 'an outward thing' (*giri wa omote muki*). Words such as *mie*,

---

[19] *giri to iu no wa nan desu ka*

[20] *O sewa ni natta kara okaishō shinakereba ikenai. O sewa ni naru* means to receive assistance, but implies being indebted to someone for the assistance received. *Kenkyusha's New Japanese-English Dictionary. 5th Edition.*

(appearance), *hyōmenteki* (superficial), and *omote muki* (outward facing) all indicate that *giri* is associated with *tatemae* and *omote*.

With these relationships in mind as a setting for *giri* to exist, it is no surprise that virtually all the employees do not regard *giri* as part of life within GA. Formal and spontaneous, front and back, heart and face, are all encouraged to be conflated as part of the new individualism. The kind of reciprocal 'helping each other out' which goes on instead of *giri* infused relationships is described by many as 'give and take':

> I don't like the word *giri*! It's a kind of give and take (*isshu no gibu ando teiku da to omou n desu kedo*), although I think Give and Take is better. With Give and Take it's as if there is a feeling of kindness involved (*yasashisa de sumeru to iu kanji desu kedo*) (Shinkawa-san).

Sakamoto-san regards *giri* as something which occurs between persons who are close to each other, or who have done something for you, but he still does not regard *giri* as existing within GA. Matsubara-san thinks of *giri* as something which: "is tied up with custom and tradition (*giri wa shuukan to dentō ni shibarareru koto*). Yamada-san, also:

> Mmmm. *Giri*, What is *giri*? With *giri* there is a sense of the inevitable from times past, which cannot be avoided and will invite some kind of divine retribution if it is not executed correctly. This is a little different, I feel, to what we have at GA, which is 'Give and Take'. With *giri* a person presents a restrained and reserved face (*sokubaku men ga aru*). There is this meaning in the word *giri*. In the case of 'Give and Take', when somebody does something for you, in return you do something for them. With *giri*, depending on what somebody does for you, there is the air that all kinds of obligations with strings attached are being created. That's how it seems to me.

The sense of reserve and restraint associated with *tatemae* and *omote* is conveyed by many of the employees in their descriptions of *giri*. Doing things for each other is perceived by the employees to occur on a relaxed and friendly basis, doing something for somebody because they want to.

> When somebody does something for me, I say "Thank you" and do something for that person. To be honest, though, the word '*giri*' gives a different impression, because when I do something for somebody, or when they do something for me, I don't have the feeling which the word '*giri*' implies. At work, I do things for people because I want to, not because I feel I have to" (Muroya-san).

Some of the employees do regard their relationships with others at GA as *giri* relationships. Ozawa-san regards *giri* as: "something you do for someone to maintain the relationship, even if you're not in the mood". But Ozawa-san's view of *giri* is any favour she does for someone when she doesn't feel like doing it, but does to keep things running smoothly:

> At work such situations are rather common. Even privately, outside work, with colleagues sometimes. There are occasions when somebody has asked me to help them, and even though it's inconvenient, I think 'Oh, well, got to do them a favour'. Such situations happen all the time among people. I can't think of an example where it's not like that.

Another fact which has emerged from the discussions on *giri* is the fact that, with *giri*, there is a strong sense that reciprocal actions are thought of as repayments for previous actions. As Hashimoto-san pointed out: "After somebody has done something for you, you return the favour.

There is that kind of feeling. Also, after you have returned the favour, with *giri* that isn't the end of it". Or as Yamada-san remarked: "With *giri* there is the air that all kinds of obligations with strings attached are being created (*giri to iu no wa sore de aite kara ataerareta koto ni yotte nanka sokubaku ga hassei suru to iu fuu na imi ga chotto watashi ni aru yõ na ki ga suru n desu keredomo*)". *Giri*, strongly linked to hierarchical relations, can, as Smith describes: "be seen as perpetual, one repayment calling forth yet another expression of favour or consideration" (Smith 1983: 46). This is why Yamada-san and Hashimoto-san regard *giri* as open-ended and having 'all kinds of strings attached'. Yamada-san's feeling that *giri*, if left unattended, can invite divine retribution comes from the fact that *giri* can "transcend generational boundaries" (Smith 1983: 46), incurring the wrath of ancestors.

What the employees regard as 'give and take', doing favours for each other and returning favours, is different from what they regard as *giri*. *Giri* is clearly associated with particular types of relationships by the employees which do not exist at GA. The giving and receiving of reciprocal favours is not perceived in terms of *giri* by the employees, or as an expression of 'human feeling (*ninjõ*) by the employees. Once again, we are presented with a single sense of action, which conforms to our graded, but fundamentally unitary social space. Consequently, in the same way that we cannot think of interactions in terms of *tatemae* and *honne* within GA, neither can the giving and receiving of favours be thought of in terms of *giri* and *ninjõ*.

*******

## Conclusion

I began this chapter by challenging recent studies on the Japanese self (Kondo 1990; Bachnik 1992, 1994; Rosenberger 1992) on the grounds that they refuse to talk about selves as individuals. This refusal is on the grounds that all concepts of an individual self, are regarded as 'incorrigible Western assumptions' (Kondo 1990: 26). Although a project of exposing hidden assumptions should be encouraged, it is a fallacy that all concepts of an individual self with a degree of autonomy in Japan are imported Western concepts. Japan has a long history of individuality, and it is in this chapter that I begin to demonstrate that the new individualism that is emerging in post-Bubble Japan is not a Western individualism, but a recognisable Japanese individualism, firmly rooted in Japan's past. Evident in these Japanese concepts of individuality, and clearly evident in the example of GA, individuality and community mutually constitute and define each other.

I began by asking the employees to discuss the relationship between individuals and groups in GA. During the course of the discussions, the employees drew on examples from outside GA and I was able to build up a picture of changing ethics and expectations. All the employees began their explanation by first describing the ethics and relationships between individual selves and between individual selves and collective selves, by describing how individuals are expected to act in a 'group (*shuudan*)'. The picture which emerged was one of individual selves expected to conform to uniform standards of thought and action, achieved by means of 'suppressing one's self (*kojin wo narubeku osaeru*)' or 'denying the self (*jibun wo korosu*)' and where 'stretching one's self (*nobite ikenai*)' or 'asserting one's self (*shuuchō suru*)' was discouraged and presented as 'unpleasant (*mazui*)'. The structure of relationships within such a collective self conforms markedly to the various group models of Japanese society (Befu 1980a, 1980b, 1990), and indeed extends the explanatory power of these models. The employees then contrasted this relationship with the relationship between individual selves and collective selves at GA. Consistent with the flattening of hierarchy, the locating of responsibility in individuals, and an organisational structure and company ethic which requires individuals to nurture their individuality and develop originality, and to stretch and assert themselves (3.3), the differences were described by the employees as a shift from selves 'suppressing their self' or 'denying their self', to selves 'expressing themselves' or 'being themselves'.

I then asked the employees about *seken* and *sekentei*. *Seken* is that group of people, known and unknown to Ego, whom the individual self perceives to be watching and listening, making sure that Ego is conforming to uniform standards for thought and behaviour set at the collective level in a given situation, but made manifest through individuals, either directly, via the various media, or in the imagination. *Seken* is a reference group, but the constituency of *seken* changes as Ego moves from one membership group to another. Even when alone, the 'ears' and 'eyes', and 'mouth' of *seken*, which gossips about Ego, are felt. These uniform standards are *seken* standards for thought and behaviour, and are known as *seken nami* standards (lit. 'In line with *seken*'). The interdependence of

the individual self and collective self in defining and constructing each other in Japan is once again evident in the relationship between *seken* and *sekentei*, literally 'the appearance', or 'form' of *seken*. *Sekentei* is 'the face-sensitive self which is addressed to *seken*' (Lebra 1992).

It was very clear that the employees at GA perceive *seken*, *sekentei* and *seken nami* to be absent from GA. This is because they associate *seken* with particular social relationships which have, to use Hashimoto-san's word, been 'demolished' (*kuzushita*). This particular structuration of relationships which they do associate with *seken* ishighly reminiscent of the various group model of Japanese society, so that we can say that *seken* is the moral universe of a given collective self that conforms to the models described by Befu (1980a, 1980b, 1990), and to some considerable extent governs and explains the motivations and acts of the individual selves which constitute a given 'group (*shuudan*)' which conforms to these models. In view of this, *seken* and *sekentei* could be added to Hendry's (1993) list of 'particular elements' which characterise and help explain Japanese society.

I then considered whether *seken* and *seken nami* standards have become fragmented in the case of GA, rather than absent altogether. The employees perceive *seken* to be absent because they are not being expected to conform to particular standards and ways of doing, and are expected to express their individuality (*kosei*) and embrace difference. As Iwata-san noted: "Other companies are different from GA and you will hear 'You have to do things this way', something associated with *seken* which you won't find here". Likewise, Ozawa-san remarked bitterly, it is common to hear 'This is the done thing, You!', or 'People are...', situations where *seken* is keenly felt by persons. The sense of being coerced to think and act in particular ways is very much a part of people's understanding of *seken*, which is why many of the employees associate *seken* with a particular configuring of social relationships. Because the employees at GA are not expected to conform to particular ways of doing, many of them feel that the eyes, ears, and gossip of *seken* are not present, and that they do not have to be careful about their *sekentei* within GA. Whether we can think of these fragmented and diverse references as *seken*, is difficult to say. Conformity to uniform ways of thinking and doing would seem to be one of the defining characteristics of *seken* as a moral and social space. Consequently any fragmentation of ethics and practice, resulting from an ethics of individuality, together with an absence of any feeling of a need to conform to uniform ways of thinking and doing set at the level of a collective self, would seem to suggest that *seken* is replaced, rather than redefined.

The fragmentation and diversification of reference groups which accompanies the legitimating and nurturing of individuality (*kosei*) is a result of individual selves being expected to hold different views and have different ways of going about things. This fragmentation stems from the requirement for an openness of self. There is also an indication that selves are required to be consistent in some way or another. This is indicated by the organisation of social space within GA, and the cognitive mapping of social space by the employees. The mapping of social space changes with the new moral guidelines enshrined in an ethics of individuality. This is very evident in the case of GA. Once again, starting with the two-tiered bi-polar model of social space, and the two-tiered 'inner/outer' self, it appears that the individual self which embodies the new individualism emerging within GA, inhabits a social space where these paired opposites have been conflated. Social space is perceived as fundamentally unitary.

Does this mean that these individual selves are morally required to be consistent in all situations? Certainly, the mapping of social space among the employees at GA, and the eradication of a situational morality, suggests that individual selves are required to act consistently. But whose notion of consistency would it be? What would be the criteria which defined 'consistent'? All of us construct consistent accounts of ourselves retrospectively, according to Strauss (1959), as we make sense of, or, as some might say, justify, our past actions in the light of the present. Too many questions remain unanswered at this stage to address this important question regarding consistency of self, and further research on my part is required before coming to a satisfactory answer.

Returning to the subject of the mapping of social space among the employees at GA, it is not as if social space is not mapped within this unitary space. Rather, social space is mapped differently. The importance of knowing how much individuality (*kosei*) to express (as opposed to how individual to be) in a given situation means that the ability 'to draw a distinction (*kejime wo tsukeru*)' between different social interactions is as important as in the bi-polar two-tiered model. Tobin tells us that *kejime* is: "the knowledge needed to shift fluidly back and forth between *omote* (front) and *ura* (back)" (Tobin 1992: 24), and Bachnik also leads us to believe that: "*Kejime*...emerges as a crucial kind of native knowledge about how movement is initiated and defined along the [bi-polar] set of coordinates" (Bachnik 1992: 156). However, *kejime* is not a 'crucial kind of native knowledge' associated specifically with these bi-polar opposites, but a noun which means 'to be able to distinguish between two things (*kejime ga aru*)', or not (*kejime ga nai*), and is evidently important in negotiating all social situations, not only those which conform to this bi-polar model.

Neither do the employees at GA have a sense of *giri*. They do not incur obligations 'with strings attached', and which 'never get settled (*mada sumanai*)'. Instead reciprocal arrangements are known as 'give and take'. Everyone I spoke to except Ozawa-san reported that they feel no obligation to return a favour when somebody does something for them, nor do they expect a favour returned when they do something for somebody. Instead the idea is that everybody helps out when they can. This important shift in reciprocal relations is engendered by two main points: First, *giri* is absent in GA because it is regarded by the employees as 'superficial (*hyōmenteki*)', 'an outward thing (*omote muki*)', as something which emphasises 'appearance (*mie*)'. In other words *giri* is clearly associated with *sekentei* and *tatemae* behaviour. Second, *giri* is absent because one of the key requirements for *giri* relationships to develop and reproduce, a rigid hierarchically-ordered, organisational structure or command structure, is absent from GA.

*******

## 5. Changing Working Practices and Work Ethics

### 1) *Risutora* and Re-engineering
### 2) Flexible Capitalism and Changing Working Practices
### 3) Unemployment and the Post-Bubble Demographics of the Workforce
### 4) Changing Work Ethics

In this chapter, I turn to consider in detail, one of the major themes of the thesis: that a new individualism and new community is emerging through both a 'top down' and 'bottom up' process. 'Top down' through planned restructuring and new companies starting up with business philosophies and practices which embrace and encourage individual initiative, like GA, and which empower individuals and give them responsibility. 'Bottom up', through the spaces which open up in a flexible economy, as people's routines and lifestyles begin to fragment and diversify, which not so much empowers them and gives them responsibility, as through the 'top down' process, but rather forces them to use their initiative and take responsibility in order to keep body and soul together. This is not as bad as it might sound, however, as the freedom which the flexible economy also creates is regarded as liberation by many predominantly younger Japanese. The 'bottom up' process has traditionally manifested itself as examples of resistance to the status quo (Irokawa 1985), but with individuality being legitimated through its incorporation into the workplace through planned restructuring in a 'top-down' process, the emergence of individuality in the mainstream through the development of the flexible economy is increasingly perceived less as resistance and more as a positive development which will help secure the nation's future, inseparable from the planned restructuring in established companies and providing a valuable pool of skilled mobile labour.

I begin by presenting the arguments for change which are being debated in Japan during the 1990s. Having 'caught up with and overtaken (*oitsuki oikosu*)' 'the West', it has been widely touted in Japan that company organisational structure and philosophy geared to 'catching up and overtaking' is unsuitable for pioneering new technologies and new markets in a mature global economy with limited prospects for growth of the kind experienced during the 1950s and 1960s. The debates concern company restructuring ideas developed primarily in the U.S. during the 1980s. The fact that these models were developed in the U.S., based on American business practices and American concepts of personhood, presents obstacles for their adoption in Japan. Nevertheless, the twin

themes of customer satisfaction achieved through all company members having access to information, and then given the task of acting on that information individually, which are at the core of these 'Business Process Re-engineering (BPR)' models, are translatable to the Japanese case and are being introduced, as the example of GA demonstrates, where customer satisfaction and access to information for all are themes developed through the organisational structure and command structure of the company with success (**3.1**, **3.2**).

Other important aspects of the debate concern creativity and initiative. Encouraging and nurturing individuality (*kosei*) has been one of the most talked about subjects in business circles in the 1990s. However, introducing work ethics and organisational structures which will not simply accommodate individuality, but will legitimate it and nurture it, and make it the basis of work ethics and practice, is another thing altogether. Talk of customer satisfaction and access to information for all, is one thing, empowering individuals and investing them with the responsibility to act on that information is something else, and is causing tensions in workplaces across Japan. During the 1980s, half-hearted attempts to harness individuality failed to integrate it into existing ethics and practice, although this brief flirtation with individuality by the mainstream resulted in seeds of individuality being left dormant (Miyanaga 1991), which are now beginning to germinate (**6.1**).

Economic conditions at a local, regional, and global level, have led to the beginnings of a flexible economy in Japan. A flexible economy exhibits new areas of production, services, and markets, as well as new types of organisational and commercial innovation, both within companies and between companies (Harvey 1990), which, in Japan, is establishing and legitimating the expression and harnessing of individuality (*kosei*) in the workplace faster than through planned company restructuring. The manner in which a flexible economy develops has been noted and studied in other advanced capitalist economies in the U.S. and Europe in the 1980s, and Japan shows every sign that it is now entering this late stage of capitalist development, having also pioneered a number of these developments.

The statistics for unemployment during the middle 1990s, together with the demographics of the workforce generally since the collapse of the Bubble in 1991 indicate a period of accelerated change, during which a flexible economy can be seen to be developing. Many of the trends described by Kaneko (1997) in **2.3** are borne out by the statistics for the period. Lifetime employment is likely to continue to exist, but the statistics demonstrate that for now, even 'lifetime employees' in their thirties are being forced onto the job market. Women also have suffered a set-back in their employment opportunities since the collapse of the Bubble.

In this chapter, the changes in the relationship between individual selves and collective selves which are occurring in GA can be seen as typical of a national goal and as part of a general trend. In the section on changing work ethics (**5.4**), the type of individual selves and collective selves which can be seen to be emerging within GA can also be seen to be emerging across society as a whole. The broader perspective of this chapter allows us to see the tensions which exist between individualistic selves of the kind legitimated by a company like GA, and those described by the employees at GA as characteristic of individual selves affiliated to 'groups (*shuudan*)' which demand uniform ways of thinking and doing. As companies restructure within different time scales, in

different ways, and to different degrees, and as individuality is increasingly regarded positively, workplaces are increasingly the site of tension between these two identifiably different types of selves. Changes in the ethics and practices of the workplace are also proceeding much faster through the development of the flexible economy than through planned restructuring by established companies, who are finding it very difficult to reconcile the needs of the future with the expectations of their present staff. For these companies, the period of transition is not only painful but potentially fatal.

The changes in the relationships between employees and companies which are occurring as a result of the burgeoning flexible economy (5.2) can be seen to match the changes in work ethics which are occurring among the population as a whole (5.4). This is most noticeable in the diminished position of the workplace in the lives of employees in the flexible economy. The shift from a 'company-centred' society to a 'people-centred' society manifests itself through workplaces providing less security and acting as less of a 'centre of emotional attachment and a nodal point of identity' (Kondo 1990). As we shall see in the next chapter with the example of those who attend underground dance music Techno parties, employees in a flexible economy either have no opportunity to identify with their workplaces, or along with an increasing number of young people working in established companies, choose not to identify with their workplace, instead seeking out other circles of emotional attachment and identity where they can express their individuality (*kosei*), which they enter voluntarily as individuals (*kojin kojin de*).

*******

## 5.1) *Risutora* and Re-engineering

A few points concerning language usage need clarifying before proceeding. The Japanese currently use a number of terms which refer to organisational changes in employment, some of which are interchangeable. *Kaikaku* and *kakushin* both mean 'reform' and are used interchangeably, although *kakushin* has overtones of innovation and of being a little more drastic.[1] In common speech and usage during fieldwork in 1993-6, the words were interchangeable with no discernible difference in meaning, *kaikaku* being the more popular. Both these words refer to structural and organisational reorganisation of the kind described by Kaneko (1997) (2.3). More colloquial and probably the most common is *risutora*, a neologism for 'restructuring'. This word is used in a number of ways, either to mean *kaikaku* and *kakushin*, although it connotes the American idea of 'Business Process Re-engineering (BPR)' and similar coordinated programmes of fundamental organisational change, or, more often than not, it refers to the cutting back of staff numbers without major organisational rethinking. The word *gōrika*, 'rationalisation', refers to cutting back staff. A more common term for staff cutbacks is *koyō chōsei*, literally 'employee adjustments'. A more colloquial expression is *chi wo nagasu koto*, literally 'blood-letting', which reflects images of the company as a living body.

Since 1993/4, when the concept of 're-engineering', developed and pioneered in the U.S., first began to be heard in Japan, most examples of *risutora*, *kaikaku*, or *kakushin*, have involved little more than *gōrika*, with analysts saying recently that even this process is not being carried out sufficiently.[2] Certainly, as government figures quoted in 5.3, indicating 'disguised redundancies (*shanai shitsugyō*)' suggest, *gōrika* is not being implemented to the extent it could be, which, according to the various re-engineering models, is essential before reorganisation can begin. This view is contested by those who regard the Japanese employment model as different, rather than inferior, to U.S. and European employment models, and point to the fact that in Japan companies, rather than government, are the primary agents in the control of unemployment (Oaklander and Whittaker 1997). These voices point to the success of the Japanese economy in the post-WWII years and in bouncing back faster than the other industrialised economies after the 1973/4 oil crises, which they attribute to the structure of labour in Japan. Either way, company 'restructuring', particularly when discussed in conversation, has tended to refer to the shedding of increasingly younger staff and significant cutbacks in recruitment, rather than anything resembling any of the 're-engineering' programmes. This is not at all surprising for at least three reasons. First, the changes which are being made are changes to existing practices and codes of conduct, rather than a start from a clean slate. Secondly, all 're-engineering' models are based on U.S. concepts of company organisation and what constitutes an ideal employee, etc. Thirdly, companies are implementing changes in different ways with different priorities and in different time scales, and have only been doing so for two to three

[1] *Kenkyusha New Japanese-English Dictionary. 5th Edition*.
[2] 'Analyst Opinions Mixed On Japan Jobless Rate Fall'. (*Reuters On-Line News Service. 29/3/96*)

years at the most.

On paper, the changes which 're-engineering' involves seem almost completely inimical to Japanese working practices and codes of conduct, and indeed long-standing companies which have relied on tried and trusted practices and ideals for many years are balking at shifting priorities and introducing new practices. However, companies founded within the last ten to fifteen years have been much more willing to embrace company philosophies, organisational structures and employee relationships which are quite different from companies who display the 'corporate centrism' described by Okumura (1992). GA is just one example.

Re-engineering, or Business Process Re-engineering (BPR), is the name given to certain restructuring programmes from the U.S. Ubukata, a well-known economics analyst and writer, compares recent U.S. economic history with that of Japan to make a case for re-engineering Japanese companies. He describes how re-engineering evolved:

> The Americans began by studying the division of labour. They said that the division of labour itself is the key to raising productivity, and so the U.S. pushed ahead with a thorough reassessment of the division of labour. The first result of this was the worker who could, and would, agree to fulfill a number of functions. During the time when one thing was mass-produced in large quantities, a division of labour which required a worker to do just one task produced results. However, as things stand now, with considerable product variation in variable quantities, under such a division of labour, productivity dropped. The Americans realised that such a division of labour was adopted along with industrialisation and that with new industries and new technologies, a new division of labour was required (*Ubukata 1995: 21. my translation*).

What Ubukata describes here is re-engineering as a general strategy. The idea of reassessing the division of labour within a company in order to realign the ends and the means to achieve those ends by the most effective and efficient means is not a U.S.-culture specific strategy, but is translatable to Japan, and is the most widespread interpretation of 're-engineering' in Japan. Having accepted in principle that such a restructuring is the answer, what is required next is to design an organisational structure which can most effectively achieve the desired ends. The first part of this is rationalisation (*gōrika*). Moving towards the more specific tenets of re-engineering, efficient circulation of information and customer satisfaction (CS) are regarded as the most important goals which employees should focus on. Harvey (1990) explains why information is central to 're-engineering':

> [A]ccurate and up-to-date information is now a very highly valued commodity. Access to and control over information, coupled with a strong capacity for instant data analysis, have become essential to the centralized co-ordination of far-flung corporate interests. The capacity for instantaneous response to changes in exchange rates, fashions and tastes, and moves by competitors is more essential to corporate survival that it ever was under Fordism (*Harvey 1990: 159*).

Both these priorities of customer service and easy access to information for all employees are at the heart of GA company philosophy (3.1), and have been developed through the organisational structure and command structure of the company (3.2). Customer satisfaction and access to information are closely linked. As Matsuda san explained (3.1), it is necessary for all employees at GA to have access to the market, which means being able to find out quickly and efficiently what customers think of current GA products and services, as well as what they would like in the future. This involves calling upon employees to use their initiative, giving them responsibility to find out how to improve current products and develop new ones. This is the crux of the argument for encouraging and nurturing individuality in the workplace through an organisational structure and command structure which allows employees access to information, and empowers them to act on

that information.

What I propose to do in this section is to look at a selection of published articles which appeared in the Japanese press between 1992 and 1995, in order to outline the developments which have led to calls for wide-ranging reforms, and to discuss what those reforms are. Having done this, I will then look at company 're-engineering' as it has been presented in the Japanese media. To begin with, though, I want to consider why reforms considered long overdue are being resisted. The problem, as it has been presented by the Japanese themselves, is that Japanese industry has been organised 'to catch up and overtake (*oitsuki oikosu*)' the advanced industrial nations (Kogura 1995; Ubukata 1995), and now, having caught up, it has to compete directly. Not only in selling products, but also in developing new technologies and products. In order to do this, so the argument continues, Japanese companies have to be shaken up in order for the talent within the system to be given the freedom to nurture and develop these new technologies. It is this fact, together with the high production costs caused by overmanning, which are driving calls for restructuring. However, although there is a sense of urgency among some (Kogura 1995; Miyauchi 1995; Ubukata 1995), these writers talk of Japanese management 'having fallen into a sense of loss of purpose and stupefaction (*oitsuki oikose no jidai ga owatte, mokuhyõ wo ushinai bõzen jishitsu no jõtai ni ochiitteiru*)' (Ubukata 1995: 20), or of employees having been 'doped' and indoctrinated by *kaisha shijõshugi*, 'company supremism', which is engendered by Okumura's 'corporate centrism' (Okumura 1992) and Nakane's thesis of 'frames (*ba*)' (1970). Kogura explains how the stupefaction came about:

> The bubble burst a long time ago - we are already in the fifth year of recession. The Japanese stock company is confronted with 'system distruct (*shisutem hakai*)' and we are sinking into the depths of confusion. Is anybody laughing now? In the Bubble era, talk of 'there is nothing more to learn from Europe and America' was heard over and above anything else. That and 'the Japanese style economic system should be exported all over the world'. We were overconfident and, not satisfied with exporting cars, household electrical goods and TVs, we believed we had to export the whole economic plan (*Kogura 1995: 13. my translation*).

It is not simply the last strains of misplaced confidence which Kogura identifies as one of the reasons why change is being resisted, although loss of face is a factor. Kogura argues that it is the 'persevering management style', *gaman no keiei*, which is responsible for what appears to be a case of not facing the writing on the wall. This attitude is a belief that things will get better if we tighten our belts and sit it out. Kogura uses the word *taida* to describe this attitude (1995: 13), which can be translated as 'idleness', 'laziness', 'sloth', 'indolence', 'sluggishness'.[3] He uses the example of the salary system, made up of a basic salary "as low as it can possibly be" (Kogura 1995: 13), together with overtime pay and bonuses:

> Salaries during recession possess flexibility. Everybody from the president, through the board of directors and middle management, all the way down to the lowest company employee is infused with *gaman no keiei*. For avoiding bankruptcy etc., this non-fixed pay system was extremely effective. However, there is a fatal downside, because this is also why a management system to turn the economy around, through creative distruction (*sõzõteki hakai*), will not be introduced.[4] If things continue to get really tough, the 'persevere method of management' may weaken, but the belief that an upturn in the economic situation ( *kaizen kairyõ*) is just around the corner will still remain. This kind of sloth currently characterises Japanese management (*Kogura 1995: 13. my translation*).

---

[3] *Kenkyusha New Japanese-English Dictionary. 5th Edition*.

[4] 'Creative distruction' is a moment in a managed business process, first put forward by Shumpeter in 1912, which has since become an axiomatic model in business organisational change theory. For a useful introduction to 'Shumpeterian innovation', see Cambridge Journal of Economixs Vol 23 No. 2. March 1999. Cambridge Journal of Economics is a forum for substantive, rather than rational economic debate.

Kogura locates the reason why change is not being implemented when it should, in the fact that everybody has been 'doped' or indoctrinated into the ideology of *kaisha shijōshugi*, 'company supremism' (Kogura 1995: 14) as well as the belief that 'things will get better if we stick it out' (*gaman no keiei*). He argues that *kaisha shijōshugi*, 'company supremism' has alienated Japanese people in their roles as both employees and consumers, and that companies have put themselves in an intractable position. The survival of the company is paramount and the interests of the company take precedent, yet ironically this philosophy, as it is described from various angles by Nakane (1970), Rohlen (1974), Clark (1979), Hamada (1980, 1992), Arai (1992), Morita (1992), Okumura (1984, 1992), Yamamoto (1993), Kogura (1995), and Ubukata (1995), is the cause of its own problems:

> Most of the rewards do not go to the people at all, but to 'the company'. During the Bubble, the money that was kept by the company flowed into stocks and real estate, while excessive production and supply facilities became too much to handle. The reason why 'the company' took the lion's share of the fruits of success was basically a conception to counteract the risk of recession...An international competitive spirit was included in this. As part of this logic, management and workers are, at some point, supposed to be rewarded...Initially, Japanese style management, whether talking of the economy or 'the company', was a tool to bring wealth to the people. But despite the people believing this, companies had a different idea.
>
> It is still considered necessary to achieve even greater heights of production and supply, when at the present time the balance of trade stands at a huge surplus of ¥130bn. The belief that the company needs to be continually strengthened is a product of indoctrinal doping. On a dollar conversion basis, the salaries of listed Japanese stock companies are among the highest in the world, but on the important yen scale they have been falling in real terms. Production and supply have grown dramatically, but the rise in consumer purchasing power has been postponed indefinitely and we have a policy of deliberately not filling the gap between supply and [domestic] demand. For the level of production and supply...consumer purchasing power could be three times what it is at the moment. The 'supreme company' Japanese company has fallen into its own trap. So the answer to the riddle of the demise of the Japanese stock company is nothing other than *kaisha shijōshugi* (company supremism) (*Kogura 1995: 15. my translation*).

So 'doped' is everybody according to Kogura, that: "If you try and shout the words 'reform! (*kaikaku*)' or 'restructure! (*kakushin*)', one hundred or two hundred times a day, nothing will change." (Kogura 1995: 15.). Miyauchi (1995), president of Orix Corporation poetically described the situation as follows:

> At the moment, like the sun just before sunset, we can see the glittering fabulous hard-earned results of the Japanese economy. However, everybody is thinking 'It will be different tomorrow'. Be that as it may, it's easy to leave things as they are today, and therefore things are continuing as they have been. Even if there are people with the foresight to shout, "Things won't last like this if you don't do something!" I suspect that the answer will be "Shut up, Noisy" (*Miyauchi 1995: 17. my translation*).

In fact the level of noise generated by the subject of *risutora* is considerable. In newspapers, on TV, in bars, on the trains, and in boardrooms and company restrooms. Ushio (1995), founder and president of Ushio Denki K.K., a listed company of just over twelve hundred employees, gives an indication of the direction the reforms should take in a speech titled, 'If We Continue to Drive for Reform We Will Return to Prosperity (*Kaikaku wo oshisusumereba, nippon wa 21 seki ni han'ei wo torimodoseru*)':

> The Japanese economy is confronted by two problems and has to reform. First, we have to free ourselves from 'one-country-prosperity-ism' and plan for the mutual co-prosperity between many nations. Up to now, we have achieved good results in the world market place by developing and thoroughly down-pricing high quality goods. However, we cannot go on forever earning our living through large exports. We have to convert from an export-led economy to a domestic targeted economy, in particular an economy built on information and service. However, despite the fact that this was pointed out some time ago, the pace of conversion has been slow. With the yen continuing to rise, a warning should be issued regarding this dragging of feet.
>
> Another reform problem is that the corporate-centred economy that has prevailed up until now needs to be changed to an individual and family finances-centred economy. Until the present, the Japanese people have been able to be happy because Japanese industry has relied on life-time employment, age-related salary, control and suppression of bankruptcy, and the interdependence of stocks. However, with this kind of Japanese management, our industry has become very inefficient (*kigyō no katsuryoku wo ubau kekka ni natteiru*).
>
> This is not the 'it's OK to be very big' age. This is the age of the small active company aiming at specific regions and at specialised niches. With respect to precisely matching the myriad needs of consumers, small operations are more suitable. Within industry as well, we are looking to give special attention to individuals. Also, the time has arrived when the company cannot demand its staff to transfer to another location by

willingly ignoring family circumstances (*Ushio 1995. my translation*).

Although thin on substantive detail, Ushio draws the reader's attention to the key points in the discourse on reform. This 'speech' is typical of the narratives for reform which reflect the changing needs of the economy as well as the changes in attitudes which are crystallizing within society as a whole. The key points which emerge from all the narratives are, in no particular order: (1) The need to shift from an export-led economy to an economy which targets the domestic economy;[5] (2) An economy which recognises the importance of information and customer service; (3) The need to shift from a 'company-centred' economy to one which emphasizes the individual and the family; (4) Specialization and niche marketing, one of the factors driving the development of the flexible economy (5.2); (5) A shift in the role of individuals within companies as well as within society as a whole; (6) Recognition of the needs and wishes of employees by calling for an end to the current system of *shukkō* (temporary assignment, three to five years away from home, requiring the upheaval of family regardless of the employees wishes or consequences for family) (2.4).

Ushio's suggested reforms are directed at 'two problems'. One is the need to change from 'one-country-prosperity-ism (*ikkoku han'ei shugi*)' and the other is to move away from a 'corporate centred economy' to an 'individual and family-finances centred economy (*hōjin chuushin no keiei wo kojin to katei chuushin no keiei ni tenkan suru*)' (Ushio 1995: 14). The need for both changes has arisen on purely pragmatic grounds. The passing of 'one-country-prosperity-ism' is due to the recognition in Japan that it is no longer possible for Japan, or any economic power, to act self-interestedly without damaging long-term objectives. This is a recognition of both moral and economic realities. This is a fact of the global economy and was clearly behind Morita's (1992) calls for change (2.4). Japan's economic prosperity has become increasingly dependent on production and investment outside the country. Japan has invested heavily in the Newly Industrialising Economies (NIE's) in Asia, relocating manufacturing through a large-scale 'hollowing-out (*kuudōka*) process to cut production costs, and through direct investment. In the same way, Japan has sought to comply with import restrictions in Europe and the U.S., and has consequently shifted production to these regions as well. Overall it can be seen that a policy of 'one-country-prosperity-ism' is not only a thing of the past: Japan creates jobs and wealth in these other parts of the world, but that any sign of self-interest would provoke a negative backlash in these regions. In addition, Japan's security relationship with the U.S. has been a big factor in Japan being able to build up its current trade surplus. It is still in the interests of the U.S. to have a powerful ally in the Pacific, but the United States wants to put the relationship on a more equal trade footing, and Japan has no choice but to comply.

I introduced the concept of the shift in emphasis from a 'company-centred' society to a society in which individuals are given a higher priority in 2.4, but we can usefully isolate five factors, a mixture of 'top-down' driven and bottom-up' driven processes, which are driving this shift. They are: (1) The need to nurture initiative and creativity to develop new technologies (top-down); (2) The need to develop individuals as consumers, to be achieved by passing the benefits of

[5]This change of direction was initially signalled in the 'Maekawa Report' of 1986 . However, Itoh (1992) argues that the Japanese economy has never been predominantly export led, as exports account for only a few percentage points more of GNP than the U.S., France, Germany, and Britain.

Japan's success onto its people (top-down); (3) Recognition of the fact that the Japanese people, having accepted a 'company-centred' society as the vehicle to prosperity, feel acutely that company self-interest has become the incentive to maintain such a system rather than the prosperity of the nation as a whole, which can only be achieved by reforming the current system (bottom up); (4) The recognition that the institution of the company cannot afford to continue to take responsibility for the lives of its employees as it has up until now (top down); (5) A shift in priorities among the Japanese public over the last few years: in 1988 more Japanese said they valued leisure rather than work for the first time (bottom up) (5.4).

Looking at Ushio's suggested reforms in more detail, he stresses the need to boost domestic consumption. In a country with considerable consumer choice and where shopping is an obsession, it is difficult to imagine that domestic consumption in Japan is lower than in all the other G7 nations (OECD Country Report/Japan 1987-93). Encouraging saving rather than spending has been the norm (1.2), with half-hearted attempts by government and banks to stimulate domestic spending in the last five years. But while credit as a means of consumption has expanded since the early 1990s, consumption has been curtailed by economic recession and job insecurity, and looks set to remain depressed (*Okasan Keizai Kenkyuujo Gekki Hōkoku*, Okasan Research Institute Monthly report 12/96). As Kogura (1995) argues, consumer purchasing power could be three times what it currently is, on the basis of current levels of production and imports.[6]

Turning to customer satisfaction now, another popular perception of Japan is that customer service is very good, and that customer satisfaction is high on a Japanese company's list of priorities. Both of these perceptions are open to question. First, consumers in Japan are only likely to be treated well while their demands fall within the strict limits of the service provided by the service provider. If you've tried to ask for white coffee like the one in the 'cake set', but without the cake, because there is no white coffee on the menu, or if you've asked for *yuudōfu* in an *izakaya* and been told its out of season, when it's only bean curd (available all year round) in a broth with a few vegetables (also available all year round), a person can begin to realise that service (*sarbisu*) has well-defined often culturally framed limits. *Yuudōfu*, for example, is a 'seasonal dish'. Secondly, consumer protection legislation is virtually non-existent in Japan, a consequence of a weak public domain (1.3). Thirdly, retail prices in Japan remain disproportionately high in order to insure against the bankruptcy of Japanese companies and whole industries (Kogura 1995: 15).

The biggest obstacle to consumer satisfaction (CS), however, is perceived to be the inward-looking self-interested company employee whose motivations are focused firmly on increasing his status within the company (Okumura 1985, 1992; Kogura 1995). In 2.4, I quoted Okumura (1992) who noted that the pursuit of status within a company comes to dominate the life of the individual. Nakane (1970) draws our attention to the inefficiency of factions (*habatsu*) in Japanese companies in this respect, a point made clearly by Matsuda-san, President of GA (3.1). While Rohlen (1974) draws our attention to the fact that the prime motivation and prized reward of Japanese company employees is status vis-à-vis each other (3.4). Here is Kogura on this point:

[6]Goods manufactured by Japanese industry outside Japan and then imported for domestic consumption are also classified as 'imported goods', and account for the rump of the increases in imports.

> The will to carry out re-engineering in the Japanese company is weak. For a long time, the Japanese company has not thought that CS is necessary, while management and workers together, within a given company, have an inward looking lifestyle and will (*shikō*) that will hang on to the last. All the more so because, as the Japanese company seems to see it, re-engineering is a simple cost-cutting recession countermeasure without CS. In addition to this, the majority of managers and middle-level administrators are unable to free themselves from a kind of inward-looking behaviour that has been around for a long time, focusing on success within the company as the highest priority. Even middle-aged staff who are transferred out to subsidiaries strongly maintain the complexion of the management class, and consequently, as a whole, CS can be forgotten. (*Kogura 1995: 15. my translation*).

Satisfying customers has obviously always been important, but Kogura (1995) and Ubukata (1995) argue that customers have not been as high on the list of priorities as they now need to be, for the following reason:

> Why did CS become important? Because the view from the supply side changed. At the start of industrialisation, consumers were in a weak position because they had to buy everything. They didn't have anything, so everything was like a necessity. However, when the situation arises where supply power and commodities reach maturity, a margin of choice emerges and consumers find themselves in a strong position. (*Ubukata 1995: 21. my translation*).

While these debates concerning *risutora* have been continuing, *risutora* has already begun in the form of 'hollowing out (*kuudōka*)' and 'rationalisation (*gōrika*)'. The net consequence of these policies has been rising unemployment (5.3). In addition to customer satisfaction, investment in information technology, and company internal restructuring to allow all employees access to information and the remit and responsibility to act on that information, companies are also seeking to shift over to a more mobile workforce. This is to allow them to accommodate and capitalize on increasingly rapid product diversity, driven by increasingly rapid technological developments and consumer sophistication (5.2).

Kaneko (1997) identifies a number of employment trends which are being adopted in order to realise these goals(2.3). To recap, Kaneko sees companies adopting an 'employment portfolio' made up of the following three general types of employment : (1) a restricted 'long-term skill accumulation group based on 'lifetime employment'; (2) a relatively mobile 'high-level specialised skills group' based on fixed-term contracts, and; (3) another relatively mobile group undertaking tasks 'from the traditional to the highly specialised' which fulfills both companies' desires to maintain a flexible element in their workforce, and which also suits those employees which want to be flexible. Kaneko argues that these portfolios are being introduced due to 'structural changes in the economy' and 'diversified employee consciousness' (2.3).

The biggest obstacles to this shift towards a more mobile workforce are both cultural and legislative. As I explained in 2.2, immobility in the labour force has become entrenched due to the broad ethical prescription 'Staying: Good::Bad: Moving', but while the economic situation has forced many employees onto the job market, the structural changes to employment practice which Kaneko describes, together with an ethical shift towards 'Moving is OK' is lapsing behind the increasing number of people in the job market caused by hollowing out and rationalisation. The new employment portfolios described by Kaneko are slow to develop due to the underlying reason that the economy is sluggish and new jobs are not being created, but this brake on increased mobility is compounded by the fact that employees and employers are still bound by the ethic 'Staying: Good::Bad: Moving'. Although it might initially seem advantageous for employees to be kept on company payrolls with nothing to do, rather than be forced onto the job market, a result of

companies trying to uphold obligations of 'lifetime employment' and trying to control unemployment, this is stopping skilled workers finding a place to use their skills, and hindering companies moving over to the new practices and bringing in the skilled employees they need. This creates a compound problem of high labour costs and inefficient use of that labour:

> Japan's most talented students in the 1950s sought jobs in the fast-growing industries producing materials like steel and cement. Today their companies are in decline. However, many of them have been assigned to new positions they were never trained for...In the 1960s, the best and the brightest entered the shipbuilding and automobile industries, and in the 1980s they sought jobs in banking and insurance, but all such fields, like the earlier industrial leaders, will eventually lose momentum. The practice of lifetime employment...lead[s] to mismatches between jobs and the people in them (*Tsukio 1992: 28*).

Specialists who are tied up in a company that doesn't need them, or who doesn't need them as much as another company, is not only an example of wasted of human resources, it also demoralises the individuals involved (Morita 1992; Tsukio 1992; Yamamoto 1993). What is required to initiate change to these predominantly cultural conventions are changes in legislation to encourage labour mobility. Levels of 'disguised redundancy (*shanai shitsugyō*)', the term for employees kept on company payrolls with little or nothing to do, are of a magnitude that doubles the official national unemployment rate (**5.3**), consequently increasing labour mobility is a high priority at the Ministry of Labour (Reuters On-Line News Service. 5/2/96). New legislation, including the relaxing of many restrictions is slowly making its way on to the statute books. However, the issue of legislation and deregulation is holding up restructuring as much, if not more so than 'cultural' factors because government thinking is itself bound by cultural precedent.

Successive Japanese governments have dragged their feet, in spite of substantial lobbying by industry and incessant pressure from the media to deregulate trade legislation, since the economic recession was generally acknowledged to have begun in 1992. Miyauchi (1995) is uncompromising in his opinion:

> There are far too many restraint controls. Many walls have been built and inside these walls, directed like a convoy of ships, industrial activity has been proceeding. But when the pace of the leader slows down, they all have to slow down...In the United States, after the much talked about 'competitive-edge crisis', industry was hollowed out, with what was left within the country being strong and competitive. However, in Japan, ten years behind the hollowed-out U.S., the total opposite development is taking place: only restriction-bound uncompetitive industry is left inside the country (*Miyauchi 1995: 17; my translation*).

Since the bubble burst, the government and the bureaucracy have been hindering rather than helping industry to recover quickly and grasp the opportunities on which economic success in the early 21st century will depend. Until now, successive governments have attempted to revive the economy with huge public spending works programmes, injecting trillions of yen into construction and manufacturing rather than opting for systemic structural reform. The reason why successive governments have avoided tackling these underlying problems in the aftermath of the Bubble is because such a move requires reform of the bureaucracy itself, which neither the all-powerful bureaucracy or government has had the inclination or the will to do. The schizophrenic nature of government action can be understood if the dictates of *ōyake* (**1.3**) are taken into account: all ministries and agencies issue statements indicating that they understand the problems and the need for action, but factional interests mitigate against anything other than statements of intent. The situation in the country has now got so serious, though, that factional differences, particularly within the bureaucracy, have had to be buried for now, and a package of deregulatory measures has

been put together. Even so, confidence in the measures being carried out is low both inside the country and among foreign investors, who are unwilling to invest until deregulation has occurred and the reforms deemed necessary to make the relationship between the bureaucracy and industry more transparent have been enacted.

Some of the reforms most likely to have a significant impact are those which will facilitate the setting up of venture capital businesses (*benchiya kigyõ,*), seen by many as the spark required to reignite the economy:

> In my opinion, in Japan at the moment there is considerable potential for starting new businesses. However, the conditions are very bad, for there are numerous regulations and restraint controls on raising funds for venture capital (*Miyauchi 1995: 16; my translation*).

> We are talking of the drive to relax regulations, but because of the need for consensus [within government and the bureaucracy], absolutely nothing is happening. There is no relaxing of regulations. That is not the only obstacle to reform, however. Industry is also crying out for the relaxing of regulations, but the truth is we are unable to free ourselves from the customary business practices of old, such as hierarchical relations, *keiretsu*, consultation, *dango*, and waiting in line (*yokonarabi*). So from government down to the people, bringing about change is difficult. No venture business is being nurtured, and there are no venture businesses springing up in a space prepared by new business regulations, like there was in the U.S., so there is no development of new technology, the very stuff of venture business. A situation is developing in which there is no engine for future growth (*Ubukata 1995: 23; my translation*).

An important change, scheduled for 1997, was the relaxing of a law that states that a financial backer may not participate in the management of a company invested in, a law that was recognised as discouraging potential investors. Other significant changes related to the setting up of holding companies and the relaxing of restrictions which allow a company to be floated on a stock exchange, which should reduce the average length of time it takes for an OTC[7] company to become listed on a stock exchange from thirty to ten years (Nikkei Weekly 26/2/96). This greatly reduces the length of time a financial backer can expect a return on an investment which must have a positive effect on the number of venture business start-ups. Venture businesses are recognized in the U.S. as the multinational corporations of the 21st century in fields such as software, artificial intelligence and biotechnology. In December 1995, 'Inc.' magazine, an American corporate journal, reported that 80% of new jobs created in the U.S. in 1995 came from venture capital initiated businesses (Nikkei Weekly 26/2/96).

Relaxing and reforming industrial legislation will facilitate labour mobility and the setting up of new businesses. Legislation involving pensions will also facilitate labour mobility, as private pension funds become available and legislation which allows employees to move their pension plans from company to company is introduced. There is still resistance, however, and not only from long-established firms or their senior employees, it seems. A report in Nikkei Weekly had this to say;

> For most new college graduates, the Japanese dream still seems to involve lifetime-employment with a big corporation, one of the theories why new venture companies, many of them in high technology, are finding it difficult to recruit young, qualified employees (*11/3/96*).

By 1997, a trend away from this was noticeable. As it became accepted among university students and recent graduates that 'lifetime employment' would continue, but restricted to fewer employees and to fewer skill groups, together with the realisation that the blue chip companies were beginning

[7]An 'Over The Counter (OTC)' company is a company which is not listed on a stock exchange, but which has securities which are traded. An example is the NASDAQ trading system in the U.S. In the U.S., companies on NASDAQ are watched as potential future high profile corporations before they become listed.

to employee their specialists already trained, rather than training in-house, more and more young people have been looking to gather experience and skills working for smaller companies, where it is now recognised that there are more opportunities for training and advancement. With the changes in legislation to encourage new business noted above, labour mobility is likely to increase substantially over the next five to ten years.

Labour mobility is likely to be facilitated by these developments, but it is the development of a flexible economy, characterised by the rapid growth of a tertiary (service industry) sector,[8] providing specialist service to companies, relieving them of the need to invest in manpower and equipment for an array of tasks previously undertaken 'in-house'. Harvey describes a flexible economy as follows:

> *Flexible accumulation*, as I shall tentatively call it... rests on flexibility with regard to labour processes, labour markets, products and patterns of consumption. It is characterized by the emergence of entirely new sectors of production, new ways of providing financial services, new markets, and, above all, greatly intensified rates of commercial, technological, and organisational innovation (*1990: 147*).

The knowledge required to undertake the increasing number of increasingly complex skills that make up a business operation also makes it increasingly difficult for a business to employ untrained personnel and train them to the required standard, until now the preferred way of recruiting and training (**2.1, 2.2, 2.3**). This delegation of tasks to outside teams of specialists is known as 'outsourcing', and leads to a fragmentation and diversification of skill groups and individuals, further encouraging and legitimating the emergence of the new individualism.

*******

[8]For analytical purposes, industry is generally divided into three sectors: (1) Primary includes agriculture, forestry, and fishing; (2) Secondary includes manufacturing, mining, and construction; (3) Tertiary includes restaurants, hotels, finance, insurance, real estate, social and personnel services, transport, communications, consultancy etc. (Itoh 1994)

## 5.2) Flexible Capitalism and Changing Working Practices

> [T]he period 1965 to 1973 [in Britain and the U.S.] was one in which the inability of Fordism and Keynesianism to contain the inherent contradictions of capitalism became more and more apparent... On the surface, these difficulties could best be captured by one word: rigidity...rigidity of long term and large scale fixed capital investments...labour markets...state commitments...Behind all these specific rigidities lay a rather unwieldy and seemingly fixed configuration of political power and reciprocal relations that bound big labour, big capital and big government into what increasingly appeared as a dysfunctional embrace of such narrowly defined vested interests as to undermine rather than secure capital accumulation...The 1970s and 1980s have consequently been a troubled period of economic restructuring and social and political readjustment [in the U.S. and Britain]. In the social space created by all this flux and uncertainty, a series of novel experiments in the realms of industrial organization as well as in political and social life have begun to take shape. These experiments may represent the early stirrings of the passage to an entirely new regime of political and social regulation (*Harvey 1990: 145*).

Japanese, or 'corporate', capitalism has its divergences from Fordist models of manufacturing production, but it has an inherent rigidity in the structure of labour, and in its relationship to capital and political power, which allows for Harvey's (1990) analysis to be applied fruitfully, and which is borne out by recent developments in Japan which closely follow those identified by Harvey. At the same time, while Japanese capitalism has a certain structural inflexibility, it also has a flexibility in its division of labour which Fordist organisation did not. This 'flexible rigidity' has been discussed by Dore (1986). Being able, willing, and expected to undertake more than one task in the work place and to generally 'muck in' has long been a feature of Japanese working practices, unlike the restrictive practices imposed by organised labour unions in Fordist systems in the U.S. and Europe. A flexible division of labour, which already exists in Japan, is a major feature of 're-engineering'. In a number of ways, the structural changes which have come to be theorized as 'flexible capitalism', or 'flexible accumulation' (Harvey 1990), are already features of the structure of Japanese capitalism, both in terms of internal company structure and also between companies. Manufacturer-centred, descending *keiretsu* systems are an example. Japanese companies pioneered production processes which were, in part, responsible for giving Japanese industry a competitive advantage over the other advanced industrial economies in the late 1970s and 1980s. Examples are automation and robots, which were embraced by Japanese workers who did not see them as a threat to their livelihoods, feeling protected as they were by employment security. This is in marked contrast to the U.S. and Britain. In 1986 there were 60 robots for every 10,000 workers in Japan, compared to 23 per 10,000 in Germany and 11 per 10,000 in the U.S. (Itoh 1996). Japan pioneered the Just-In-Time inventory flow system which greatly reduces the need to stockpile raw materials and components, and Japanese companies greatly increased the turnover time of products, introducing new products at an ever increasing rate. Many of these advantages which Japanese companies had over their American and European competitors were possible because of the structure of manufacturer-centred *keiretsu*. For the just-in-time process, components are not delivered to the assembling plant until just before they are needed, requiring contractors to manufacture components of varying quantities within a precise timetable. The idea that only planning and maybe assembling is what a

manufacturing company actually does, has increasingly become a feature of manufacturing processes in the other advanced capitalist economies. Japan also pioneered TQC, 'Total Quality Control', a commitment to reliability and quality which also kept the nations' industry ahead of the competition in the 1980s. There are notable advantages in the Japanese system over Fordism, but unless the economy is growing at over 3% a year, the system is unsustainable (Itoh 1996; personal communication). In addition, Japan may not have suffered from the restrictive labour practices found in the U.S. and Europe in the 1970s, but restrictive legislation and cultural precedent create similar rigidities in Japan in the 1990s (**5.1**).

Motives for change are not simply economic, either. In addition, the revelations exposed by the collapse of the Bubble have raised moral question marks over many practices and codes of conduct, which will have to be taken into consideration by industry, government and the bureaucracy, if Japan is to maintain a highly motivated workforce. As Akio Morita (1992), founder and former president of Sony, argues:

> All these practices by Japanese companies have certainly contributed to raising their competitiveness. Yet on the other hand, Japanese companies may have sacrificed consideration for their employees...[and] in order to increase their own competitiveness....placed unreasonable demands on their vendors [suppliers] (*Morita 1992: 12*).

Within Japan, as the new millennium approaches, there are five 'processes' through which working practices and work ethics are changing in line with the growth of a flexible economy. These are: (1) 'Hollowing-out' of manufacturing industry (*kuudōka*); (2) Growth of tertiary sector industry; (3) Growth of part-time, temporary and 'outsourced' work (predominantly white-collar/ professional); (4) A change in emphasis in the balance between 'group-orientated' working practices and ethics, and 'individual-orientated' practices and ethics: (5) Increased refinement and proliferation of markets both creating and targeting continually fragmenting and diversifying tastes.

Harvey (1990) does not discuss the effect of 'hollowing out (*kuudōka*)' on work practices and work ethics in any detail. Hamada (1992), however, looks at the relationship between a Japanese company and its overseas white-collar employees. She demonstrates that overseas operations are still regarded as subsidiaries (*kogaisha*) by staff, but because Japanese companies are coming to rely more and more on their overseas subsidiaries, with overseas subsidiaries gaining reputations for their products independently of the parent company, and contributing increasingly higher profits to company consolidated results, the relationship between employees in the head office and those in subsidiaries is shifting. Being moved to a subsidiary is still regarded as a demotion or a move sideways, and removes the employee from of the centre of vital networking and alliance building and consolidating activities (Hamada 1992). Until recently, Hamada argues, no positive attributes were required for being sent abroad, not even English (1992: 155), but with companies coming to rely more and more on their overseas subsidiaries, the need to send high-calibre staff abroad is changing the relationship between companies in the same *keiretsu*, which in turn is changing the nature and perception of 'overseas assignment (*kaigai shukkō*)'. However, the sense of *keiretsu* which concentrates power, status and prestige at the centre still exerts a strong pull on *kaigai shukkō* employees, which resists change:

> In the mind of the Japanese expatriate manager, all subsidiaries are working for the success of the global strategies of the parent firm. Their continuous and strenuous efforts for the overseas subsidiaries success is

> based upon their ardent desire to go back 'home' with a mark of distinction. The referees of their accomplishments are the organizational insiders, particularly those privileged enough to stay at its core. In this case, objective financial data such as the firm's past performance against its international competitors are not considered as meaningful as is perceived performance vis-à-vis the domestic unit in Japan. At the individual level, the Japanese managers in this study evaluate their performance against the perceived task performance of the 'significant others' [in the flagship operations at home] (*Hamada 1992: 161*).

In exactly the same way that Kogura (1995) argued that the 'inward-looking' Japanese manager is more concerned with his status vis a vis his colleagues at work, and consequently is less interested in customer satisfaction, so we can see the same mechanism in Hamada's (1992) description above.

For blue-collar workers, the effects of 'hollowing-out' are not a transfer abroad but unemployment. Working practices in manufacturing, for those who remain in employment, are not subject to talk of restructuring beyond 'blood-letting' at the moment. Shopfloor working practices also tend to change incrementally over time with the introduction of new production technology. In the blue-collar sector of manufacturing, labour costs were already at a minimum possible using current technology (Itoh 1993), in marked contrast to the bloated white-collar sector. However, this is not low enough, which is why manufacturing jobs are now being transferred abroad, where labour is cheaper and, as Harvey puts it; "the social contract with labour [is] either weakly enforced or non-existent." (Harvey 1990: 141).

Turning to the growth of the tertiary sector, it can reasonably be said that the sub-contracting system in Japan allowed for the development and implementation of flexible production systems, with far less disruption to the organisational structure of production than in the U.S. and Britain. Not only did it allow Japanese companies to pioneer what Harvey usefully calls the move from economies of scale to economies of scope (Harvey 1990: 155), rapidly increasing both the turnover time of products and product diversity, the sub-contracting system also took much of the strain in times of economic downturn, acting as a buffer to protect larger companies and corporations. This was the case in the 1970s, and the same thing has happened again through the 1990s. Unlike the 1970s, however, most of the job losses have been in administrative jobs in the aftermath of the Bubble, which have tended to be concentrated in the main company and its direct subsidiaries. However, this will eventually be offset by the growth of the tertiary sector in Japan, which has so far followed that of other advanced industrial nations (Harvey 1990: 157), suggesting that in spite of the sub-contracting system, a fundamental shift in the organisation of production is currently underway in Japan in the 1990s.

The role of technology in the development of the tertiary sector is also significant. The technologies of economies of scope, together with the technologies of 'time-space compression' (Harvey 1990: 201), particularly information technology and communications, stimulated the consumption side. As Harvey puts it:

> Flexible accumulation has been accompanied on the consumption side...by a much greater attention to quick-changing fashions and the mobilization of all the artifices of need inducement and cultural transformation this implies. The relatively stable aesthetic of Fordist modernism has given way to all the ferment, instability, and fleeting qualities of a postmodernist aesthetic that celebrates difference, ephemerality, spectacle, fashion, and the commodification of cultural forms (*Harvey 1990: 156*).

This market sensibility, rather than a post-modern aesthetic, made possible by technological developments and the pursuit of more markets, in turn led to a proliferation of industries to produce, finance, and spread, not only products, but product and corporate images, through events

and spectacles. This whole process, however, requires a high level of consumption, not only consumption of products and images by individual consumers, but also consumption of services by producers. In addition to a proliferation of services generated by the market possibilities opened up by new technology, activities previously internalised within manufacturing firms were 'outsourced'. The combined effect of these two processes has led to the growth of tertiary industry as a qualifiable stage in the development of capitalism, producing a consciousness where every stage in a production process becomes a consumer/producer loci. Hence the central importance of customer service (CS) and access to information:

> The emphasis on information has also spawned a wide array of highly specialized business services and consultancies capable of providing up-to-the-minute information on market trends and the kind of instant data analysis useful in corporate decision making. It has created a situation in which vast profits stand to be made on the basis of privileged access to information...Access to scientific and technical know-how has always been important in the competitive struggle, but here too, we can see a renewal of interest and emphasis, because in a world of quick-changing tastes and needs, and flexible production systems, access to the latest technique, the latest product, the latest scientific discovery implies the possibility of seizing an important competitive advantage. Knowledge itself becomes a key commodity, to be produced and sold to the highest bidder, under conditions that are themselves increasingly organized on a competitive basis (*Harvey 1990: 159*).

For the year January 1995/6, the fluctuations in employment in Japan by sector on the previous year, indicates the current trend of a decline in secondary industries and a growth in tertiary industries (see below)

**Distribution of Employed by Industry Sector. January 1996**

| Industry | Jan 1996 | year-on-year change |
|---|---|---|
| Manufacturing | 14.26m | -1.7% |
| Construction | 6.47m | -1.8% |
| Services | 15.91m | +2.0% |
| Trading/Hospitality | 14.38m | +0.9% |
| Transport/Telecommunications | 4.00m | +1.8% |

Source: Nikkei Weekly 7/5/96. Figures: Ministry of Labour (*rōdōshō*)

In many respects, what is referred to as post-Fordism (Itoh 1992) in advanced industrial economies such as the U.S. and Britain, has been a feature of Japanese capitalism since 1973: increased flexibility brought about by microelectronic (ME) technology, the 'cooperation' of the work force of large manufacturers in implementing automation and flexible production, a subcontracting system already in place, and employees expected to undertake more than one task in the workplace. The growth of a service sector of the kind described by Harvey (1990), characterised by operations previously managed 'in-house' being 'outsourced', increasing in scope and complexity, and by the rapid development of a cutting-edge high-technology industrial sector, is only just beginning to emerge in Japan, but emerging it is. Up until now, venture business, which has been such a feature of the revival of the U.S. economy, has been held back by restrictive legislation (**5.1**), a conservatism bred by corporate centrism, and an education system which has mitigated against the brightest minds taking the plunge and starting out on their own (**5.4**). Slowly, as in the U.S. and Britain, increasing numbers of capable employees are being made unemployed and this is creating a pool of labour which venture business, when it takes off, as it must, will tap into. There are also increasing numbers of capable employees within companies who would like to move and will take advantage

of the opportunities deregulation will bring, as a climate that is much more favourably disposed to labour mobility continues to emerge.

In addition, as part-time and fixed contract staff undertake more of a company's business, companies are aware that they have to offer their part-time and fixed contract staff similar conditions as their full-time staff. This is already happening in industries which already have a high level of 'part-time' staff, such as retailing, as they move towards a workforce in which around 70% of staff are 'part-time' (Nikkei Weekly 7/10/96).[9] There is a great deal of interest in a plan known as the 'cafeteria plan', whereby employees are given points which they can 'spend' on various benefits and services which a company provides, including mandatory benefits such as health insurance. In the cases where the plan has been adopted, all employees regardless of position, gender, age, or years of service, receive the same number of points. According to a Ministry of Labour bulletin,[10] companies are recognizing the different and diversifying needs of employees. On average, mandatory benefits such as health insurance, account for 65% of employees benefits, the rest made voluntarily by companies as part of employees remuneration. Under this plan, points are allocated, a certain amount of which can be used on a variety of categories offered. By more accurately targeting the needs of employees it apparently reduces company benefit budget's, which probably explains its popularity amongst employers. Giving 'part-time' workers similar benefits to full-time staff is not so much an act of philanthropic generosity as recognition that as the workforce becomes more flexible, loyalty and motivation have to be created in new ways, itself a recognition of the diversifying needs and desires of employees.

*******

As part of their attempt to stimulate labour mobility, the government planned a package of legislation for 1997, designed to encourage the growth of the flexible economy by giving labour mobility a legitimacy, and so that both employees and employers are given an idea of their responsibilities to each other. Two important pieces of legislation are: (1) the extension of the maximum contract period for contract employees from 1 to 3-5 years. From an employees perspective, this will give contract employees more security. From a company's perspective, they can expect to attract higher calibre staff and match skills with jobs if those prospective employees know that their lifestyle will not be compromised by the insecurity of a one year maximum contract; (2) The liberalization of the business objectives of employment agencies. This is in response to the growth in demand for part-time and more flexible employment, which in the Tokyo area grew by 18% in the first half of 1996 (Financial Times 5/12/96). Until early 1996, employment agencies could only provide temporary staff in sixteen largely clerical categories permitted by the Ministry of Labour. These are to be expanded to allow agencies to offer not only staff in a wider range of

[9]'Part-time' refers to staff who work a full working week, but do not receive the benefits of 'full-time' staff. Neither are they expected to do overtime, except under special circumstances. With the current changes in working practices and ethics the idea of 'full-time' and 'part-time', as it has been used up until now, is changing.

[10]*'Custom-Made Benefit Plan: Growing Number of Firms to Give Employees a Choice'. Japan Information Network.13/11/96. http://www.jinjapan.org*

specializations, but also more comprehensive services through outsourcing. In anticipation of the new legislation, Pasona, Japan's largest temporary staff agency, set up a new company called Pasona SoftBank in 1995, offering a number of outsourcing services which until recently would only have been dealt with in-house by companies. Pasona Softbank also offers training programmes in advanced information technology, indicating a trend to outsource company training, previously a vital part of developing the loyalty and motivation in employees.

Pasona's brochures aimed at people who might be thinking of temping, stress the absolute necessity of professionalism. Most of the personnel that register with Pasona are women, but Japan has a highly educated female workforce that are easily motivated, according to the staff I spoke to. Temporary employment working practices accord with work ethics which are more in tune with how these women see themselves and their relationship to an employer in an ideal situation. What this means essentially, is that their job description is clear cut, their hours are strictly defined, and they enter into an agreement with an employer 'with no strings attached', to use the expression a number of the GA employees used to describe *giri* relationships (4.5). Working as a temp gives the women a feeling of being in control of their lives which they would never have as employees of the companies they temp at. They also receive more respect, for I was told they receive far less sexual harassment in the workplace as outsiders working for another company than they would as insiders.

An emphasis on customer satisfaction and a the awareness that supplying temporary staff is a producer/consumer loci, two of the recognised characteristics of flexible capitalist relations of production (Harvey 1990), are evident at Persona: temporary staff, ostensibly employees, are treated more as customers than as employees. This is very evident in the relationship between the Pasona staff and the temps who are registered with them. I went through Pasona's 'new client orientation', one of a small number of men who do. A Pasona employee carries out skill assessment and language aptitude tests, the applicant is then graded and put on a database. As is quite common in Japan, registrations and assessments like this are not carried out in private, but in a semi-public area. There were dividers to separate the applicants and their assessor, but I was able to listen to over ten other applicants, all of them Japanese women, and in each case I was aware that the Pasona staff treated their potential 'employees' as if they were customers. Also during my visit, I saw a number of registered Pasona temps come into the offices for various reasons, and in all cases they were treated with respect and courtesy by Pasona staff as if customers. Most contracts are three to six months, and are often renewed, which suits the temporary worker who wants flexibility. However, a Pasona staff member told me: "It is not uncommon for a company to want to keep a temporary employee who is efficient, especially if that person is liked by the company staff. But we have had temporary staff who have worked at the same company for more than six months or a year complain to us that they began to be treated as a company employee (*shu in*). What they meant was, they were slowly treated with less and less respect".

The brochures which are aimed at companies who may be thinking of hiring temporary staff stress the lack of administrative costs which hiring temporary staff gives. It is stressed that staff are provided fully trained to do specific tasks, whether it is photocopying and typing, or fully trained

multi-lingual personal assistants who are specialists in particular industries, such as finance, manufacturing, etc. In 1994, when I spoke to Pasona staff, most of the personnel registered on their books were women, and the majority of enquiries made by companies were for secretarial staff. Pasona specializes in supplying staff to foreign companies in Japan, who were much more familiar with flexible working. In 1996, though, I contacted Pasona again and asked them to send me some information on their latest services. When it arrived, Pasona had set up a new company, Pasona Softbank, which specializes in outsourcing and training. The company were clearly moving in the direction of providing a more comprehensive human resources service, a development which is in line with Harvey's (1990) description of a developing flexible economy.

Pasona is clearly a well-organised, professional and morally correct organisation. That is to say, it does not seek to compromise its clients, either its temporary staff or the companies which hire Pasona's temps. As a whole 'human resources' industry develops, devoted to placing staff with companies on either temporary, part-time, or longer fixed term contract bases, there are bound to be some less than scrupulous agencies, particularly those who bring together the less able staff and companies who see the new working arrangements as another way of exploiting the more vulnerable members of the workforce. A burgeoning 'training industry' has already been blighted by training course scams (*Japan Times 16/3/95*), whereby persons who have been approached over the telephone and asked if they would be interested in a number of training schemes, are suddenly hassled for payments, accused of signing up for courses and not paying up. So, although the government is currently liberalizing the legislation on employment companies in order to cater for the growing flexible labour market, it will also have to introduce new safeguards in many areas, as new 'employment portfolios' are developed and working practices diversify in a weak public domain.

*******

### 5.3) Unemployment and the Post-Bubble Demographics of the Workforce

Between May 1992 and May 1997, according to the unemployment figures issued by the Japanese government, unemployment nearly doubled from 1.8% to 3.5%, the highest figure ever recorded since figures were first kept in 1953. This period has also seen the highest ever month on month increases, between Nov/95 and Mar/97. Since the beginning of the recession, in the wake of the Bubble collapse, the trends in unemployment have followed a path which indicates the response of companies to the increasing economic difficulties over the period. Essentially this has been as follows: To begin with, companies targeted managers in the 45-54 age band, but even then, 'involuntary resignations (*fushō taishoku*)'[11] were kept to a minimum, with many companies keeping staff on payrolls with nothing to do. These employees are known as 'disguised redundancies (*kigyōnai shitsugyō*)'. Certainly, the figure for those recorded as unemployed by the Management and Coordination Agency (*sōmu shō*) is estimated to be at least half the figure that includes 'disguised redundancies'. 'Disguised redundancies' may turn up to work everyday, or they may, as is increasingly the case, be kept on the payroll at around 70% of their salary without having to turn up for work. The existence of disguised redundancies at all, should be regarded as an indication of the strength of obligations engendering 'lifetime employment', which employers feel towards their older employees. However, as I indicated in 5.1, some analysts suggest that this is also part of a sense of a wider social responsibility, encouraged by government and supported by public cash handouts to companies who keep staff on payrolls (Oaklander and Whitteker 1997). This sense of social responsibility can also be interpreted as pressure from the Japanese Government on companies to keep everything looking like 'business as usual', in order to limit the damaging social effects of widespread long-term unemployment which the nation is facing. Figures for the gender of these employees was unavailable, but it is likely that the majority of 'disguised redundancies' are men. Female unemployment is discussed below.

The government unemployment figures are recognised as being conservative, due to the strictly defined meaning of 'unemployed' in Japan. But it is recognised by both international, Japanese government, and private data research institutions, that the figure including those who fall into the 'disguised redundancy' category, would be double the official figure, at least. The Economic Planning Agency (*keizai kikaku shō*) figure, the official government estimate, puts the unemployment total three points higher if 'disguised redundancies' are included (Economist Intelligence Unit 12/1/96). The Japan Federation of Employers Association figure is about the same (Reuters On-Line 5/2/96), while the OECD figure of 10% (EIU 12/1/96) also includes those women who are estimated to have given up looking for work altogether, in the face of mounting discrimination as the job market enters a period of instability. A figure of 6-10% would be more in line with other

[11]These 'resignations', are 'involuntary resignations (*fushō taishoku*)', which: "indicates the loss of a job against the worker's desire, such as dismissal, employer pressure to leave, employer bankruptcy, or the closing of a family business" (Nikkei Weekly 30/4/96).

advanced industrial nations (OECD).

'Disguised redundancy' certainly keeps the official figure lower than it might otherwise have been, but, many economists argue, this is merely delaying the inevitable. This is reflected in a growing concern about a mismatch between the staff companies have on their payrolls and the skills which the same companies are beginning to require as the information age and new business philosophies begin to be adopted. This means many employees kept on the payroll will not be suitable even when conditions pick up. At the same time, staff who might be more useful elsewhere are also forced to stay with their employers due to the current instability and due to attitudes to moving (**5.1, 5.2**).

Even though there are hundreds of thousands of employees being kept on payrolls with nothing to do, the level of unemployment does keep rising ever faster. The year on year increase for Jan/96 was 680, 000, an increase of 100,000 on January the previous year, with the *Nihon Keizai Shimbun* (Japan Financial Daily Newspaper) noting that the rise in the number of heads of households out of work is increasing substantially (Nikkei Weekly 30/4/96). There is also a trend of increasingly younger employees being forced to resign through 'involuntary resignations (*fushō taishoku*)'. The Nikkei notes that an increase of 70,000, year-on-year, 'involuntary resignations' in the 25-39 age band, recorded in Feb/96, indicates a new trend as increasingly younger employees are forced out of work (Nikkei Weekly 30/4/96). Many of Japan's leading companies are continuing the trend which Yamamoto (1993) recorded, reducing their workforces between 10% and 12%. Some, like Daiwa Bank, are planning a 27% reduction (Reuters On-Line 7/3/96). Meanwhile, the collapse of a number of Japan's major financial institutions in the autumn of 1997, who had been trying to postpone failure since the collapse of the Bubble, has resulted in a number of analysts predicting further increases in the unemployment figure.

In addition to forcing employees to resign, and keeping many on the payroll with nothing to do, employers have been cutting back on recruitment. Forced resignations have been a shock to the nation. The practice of rescinding on obligations which are so institutionalised that some even think they are statutory, has caused a national shock in itself, regardless of the upheaval to the lives of employees and families directly affected. Cutting back on recruitment to the extent that graduate recruitment has dropped by as much as 90% (Nikkei Weekly 7/5/96) is having a similar effect. 'Involuntary resignation' has tended to affect older workers, although increasingly younger workers are now finding themselves victims, whereas cutting back on recruitment has been primarily affecting the young. In May/96, against a background of an official overall unemployment figure of 3.5%, the official figure for the 15-24 age-band was 8.5%, nearly three times the national average. As an example of how graduate recruitment[12] has dropped, Japan Travel Bureau, the country's largest travel organisation, reduced its graduate intake from 900 in 1992, to 130 in 1996. Sony reduced their intake from 1,000 in 1992, to 280 in 1996, and IBM Japan reduced their intake from 1,500 in 1990, to 140 in 1994 (Nikkei Weekly 7/5/96). When these figures are analysed by sex, they reveal that males are finding more openings than females for the corporate jobs. The figure for job openings for males dropped by 12% year-on-year in 1996, while the number of openings for women dropped by 20%

[12]Graduate recruitment refers to high school and university graduates

(Nikkei Weekly 7/5/96), with Mitsubishi Bank not recruiting any female graduates at all in 1996 (Reuters On-Line 12/12/95), citing that investment in information technology had removed the need for any new female staff. Female graduates in Japan have consistently been excluded from career positions in Japanese companies, invariably having to settle for clerical jobs with little or no responsibility or opportunity for career development. While this has been a source of contention for women, especially those trying to improve the position of women both within and outside the workplace, the current situation, in which discrimination on the basis of sex has come to the fore, has attracted both a lot of attention and a lot of criticism. This trend has been rationalised, or excused by apologists, as 'being in the national interest'. Such reasoning does not mollify the large numbers of educated women in the manner it has done in the past, however. What is happening is that women are being excluded from the jobs they were beginning to be able to compete with men for, such as sales and administrative careers in industry and in retailing, while opportunities for lower paid part-time work with little security are flourishing. The conditions under which many of these part-timers work are also causing concern, as employment laws have yet to catch up with the rapidly changing working practices. What amounts to a reversal of trend, in which women are increasingly being forced back into a kind of employment underclass, is revealed in the employment statistics which show that while youth male unemployment continues to rise, up 1.1 y-y to 8.5%, female unemployment in the 15-24 age band showed a drop of 0.1% in 1996, to 7.1%. So while the number of career openings for women has decreased faster than men in the 15-24 age band, the number of women in work has increased faster than men (Nikkei Weekly 7/5/96). The only conclusion to be drawn from these figures is that women are filling up the increasing number of badly paid, insecure positions which are being created at the bottom end of the flexible economy.

Having said that, women are also currently taking the majority of the new temporary and outsourced jobs which are appearing as industry begins to move towards the flexible working practices which are increasing mobility in the work force. These young women are given a new found freedom and security, provided by the backing of the employment companies they work for (5.4). The reason why women are leading the way, however, is not due particularly to equality being built into new practices, but because secretarial and administrative jobs with little or no responsibility are the first to be outsourced and given over to fixed term and temporary arrangements. The recent situation, in which young women have been discouraged from applying for jobs when contacting companies, have been given false information so they miss introductory seminars, or are given interviews but then are simply ignored (Japan Times 31/7/95), has blown a gaping hole in the nation's equal opportunity laws, and revealed the widespread sexism in the Japanese workplace that was never far from the surface.

Pressure has also filtered down into the education system. This is having a twin effect. On the one hand, it is forcing university students to work harder than they had thought necessary, as prospective employers become more selective and demanding. Also, in addition to the increased competition among students, resulting from drastically reduced graduate recruitment, these young graduates are also having to compete with older more experienced staff, as employers begin to rethink their recruitment strategies and their attitudes to mid-career entrants. Again, networks

between companies and educational establishments have virtually broken down with graduate recruitment falling as it has, and now with ability and individuality becoming increasingly important in the selection process, some companies, together with employing mid-career entrants and specialised staff on fixed-term contracts, are experimenting with application forms which do not ask for the candidate's school or university. Sony are just one example (Morita 1992). Although this is unlikely to become common practice, it shows that companies are serious about finding the most talented, self-motivated, creative employees. In the same way, pressure is on high school students, too.

The number of unemployed graduates has also been increasing, as a result of the drop in graduate recruitment and due to the new recruiting practices of hiring experienced staff. The result has been an increasing number of young people who are facing a future they cannot predict and which has no precedent in recent experience. They are being forced to be inventive and are having to live for the moment, becoming increasingly independent. Being forced to use their initiative in this way, however, these young adults are coming to rely on their individuality, and instead of relying on and looking for guidance from those older than themselves, they are forming associations with persons of similar but not necessarily the same age, of different sex, and of similar interests, or attributes. To use Nakane's (1970) terms, these young Japanese are increasingly coming to associate on the basis of attribute, not frame, and they are developing a sense of self, not as extensions of corporate groups, but as individuals, and as part of a flexible economy which encourages and legitimates the 'bottom-up' process of developing and nurturing individuality.

*******

## 5.4) Changing Attitudes to Work and Changing Work Ethics

In 5.1 I discussed the reforms which are being debated and implemented in established companies to varying degrees in Japan in the aftermath of the Bubble. Together with the arrival of companies like GA, in which individuality (*kosei*) is legitimated through the organisational structure and command structure of the company, these reforms are a 'top-down' programme which is redefining work ethics and practices. In 5.1, I briefly mentioned that some of these measures which were being considered were in response to changing attitudes and values among the Japanese public, trends which can usefully be thought of as a 'bottom-up' process. In this section, I will look a little closer at some of these changes in attitudes and values which are a part of this 'bottom- up' process, as well as how they constitute the new individualism, before introducing those people who attend underground dance music Techno parties, in the next chapter.

Many of these changes in attitudes and values, which are part of the gradual redefinition of individual selves and collective selves, were fermenting, or were evident, prior to the Bubble collapse, tended to be perceived as the colonisation of the Japanese self by a Western individualistic self, and were regarded negatively (4.1, 4.2). The two most significant manifestations of these changes, even though closely related, indicate that a fundamental shift in this perception has occurred in Japan over time. The first significant manifestation, that more people regard leisure as more important than work, occurred in the mid-1980s, and was generally regarded as proof of a gradual colonisation by 'Western' individualism. In terms of the relationship between work and other parts of a person's life, however, this simply meant that more people regarded work, less as an end in itself and more as a means of allowing individuals to pursue their lives more as they wish, by associating with whom they like when they like. The second manifestation was a desire on the part of ordinary people to move from a 'company-centred' society to a 'people-centred' society. This shift in attitudes, although essentially the same as the first, was not at any time, as far as I am aware, regarded as a colonisation, but as an overdue adjustment (2.4). The idea that Japan *should* move from a 'company-centred' society to a 'people-centred' society is largely a response by 'opinion leaders' to the changes in attitudes towards work, and is a recognition of the need to redefine the ways in which employees need to be motivated and rewarded, in view of these changes. This recognition is an example of the dynamic process that exists between 'top-down' planning and 'bottom-up' momentum, while the trend of placing leisure above work and of wanting to reduce the importance of the workplace in life itself appears indicative of an emerging individuality and a concomitant desire to redefine the structure and ethics of community.

It has been suggested that the fall of the workplace as the 'centre of emotional attachment and nodal point of identity' (Kondo 1990) in the lives of the majority of the Japanese people began at least as far back as the early 1970s. This does not mean that there was not resistance to prevailing work ethics before this, undoubtedly there was. What I am talking about is a qualitative shift in

values (*kachikan*) among a significant number of people, which leads to pronouncements, usually retrospectively, that 'things changed'. Recent studies on changing attitudes and values among young Japanese in the 1980s (Sengoku 1991) suggest that these changing values started with the parents of the current under 25's. Sengoku (1991) argues that the first oil crisis in 1973 was a turning point. He begins by stating that in Japan's modern history, that is since the Meiji Restoration in 1868, the nation has always been united behind certain goals, and devoted itself to pursuing and outperforming the major Western countries: what was known as the task of 'catch up and overtake (*oitsuki oikosu*)' (**5.1**). This goal motivated and united the country under all governments from Meiji, through the military dictatorships of the Taishō (1912-1926) and early Shōwa (1926-1945) period, and through the post-war late Shōwa (1945-1989) period (Hall, J et al. 1977; Gluck 1985; Okumura 1984, 1992; Itoh 1992, 1994; Ubukata 1995). Sengoku argues that most people diligently worked towards this one goal until the first oil crisis in 1973, when values changed drastically because the myth of ever-continuing economic growth was shattered, and businesses were forced to cut wages and reduce work forces. Sengoku describes how people were 'devastated' and 'shattered', having sacrificed their lives believing economic growth would continue. As a result, some members of the public began to wonder if there was more to life than sacrificing oneself for the company and the economy. Sengoku argues that it was this change of values that influenced those born in the early 1960s, who came to be known as the 'New Breed' (*shinjinrui*) (**6.1**). What characterised this generation, according to Sengoku, is that, as a generation, they did not unquestioningly accept as absolute the values of previous generations, and that this led to a diversification of values.

In addition, these young people have been increasingly exposed throughout their lives, to values associated with ideas about self-expression and freedom of choice, through the marketing of all manner of products and services. Yet self-expression and freedom of choice are not simply alluring concepts co-opted by East Japan Railways to sell day trips to Hakone[13] or skiing holidays to Hokkaido, which older Japanese look at with detachment. For younger Japanese, freedom to come and go and self-expression are realities within the spaces that the post-bubble environment has opened up. The rapid expansion of flexible capitalism or post-Fordist employment practices (Harvey 1990; Itoh 1992) has then legitimated and begun to entrench these spaces, creating a new kind of society, not through 'top-down' planned restructuring directly, but in a 'bottom-up' process in the spaces opened up by the flexible economy, legitimated by the work ethics which the flexible economy promotes. Generally speaking, young Japanese under the age of around thirty also know the fruits of the Japanese economic miracle better than anybody else. Children and young adults who have reached maturity in the 1980s and in aftermath of the Bubble have grown up in a time of affluence. Within a context of a generally high level of affluence, enormous product diversity and reinvention, and the propensity of mothers to spoil their children, young Japanese are very sophisticated consumers with a highly stimulated level of desire. A life of suppressing one's desires, one's opinions, one's very self, is not only anathema to many young Japanese, it is not something they have ever had to do. Now, as young adults, they may well have to suppress some of their desires, but they are already familiar with the new work ethics of expressing yourself and using

[13] A popular spa resort, an hour by train from Tokyo

your initiative.

In the post-Bubble environment, many young Japanese who have graduated from high school and university in the aftermath of the Bubble are being left to drift, growing into young adulthood with no established codes of conduct or practices to follow. The rising figure for youth unemployment (5.3) together with the falling figures for job openings corroborate what can be seen on the streets of Japan's major cities: thousands of young people 'hanging out' at all times of the day or night. Many of them are getting by working in the lower end of the flexible economy, waiting for things to pick up. Forced to think for themselves and use their initiative, expressing their individuality (*kosei wo dasu*) becomes a way of life, as they very soon begin to establish a degree of independence.

The period beginning with the aftermath of the Bubble in 1991 is a period of accelerated change and confusion in the workplace, as the following accounts demonstrate. Sengoku's study is a dispassionate look at the changing values he identifies. Ijiri (1990), on the other hand, an editorial writer for the *Nihon Keizai Shimbun* newspaper and a critic who has written extensively on the effects of global capitalism on ethics and aesthetics in Japan, gives us a polemical view which calls for a return to the past. In a paper titled "The Breakdown of the Japanese Work Ethic", written before the Bubble collapse, Ijiri begins with the conclusions of the Ministry of Labour's 1990 White Paper:

> The 1990 white paper, issued in July, provides startling evidence of the shift in attitudes. It notes that the young workers who hope to stay at their present place of work has decreased so sharply in numbers that their share in the work force is now smaller than that of satisfied workers in other industrial countries. It further states that young workers in Japan express less satisfaction than those in the United States and Britain in each of the following respects: wages, working hours, employment security, chances to utilize one's talents, opportunities for promotion, and the quality of interpersonal relations. (*Ijiri 1990: 35*)

Ijiri argues that Japan's youth have been corrupted by consumerism and by the employment industry.[14] He refers to Japan's youth as the 'life-begins-at-five' crowd, stating that the employment magazines such as *B-ing* and *Torabaiyu* (from the French 'travaille') have 'vulgarized' the work ethic of the Japanese (Ijiri 1990: 39).[15] He ignores the fact that the increase in flexible working practices is predominantly market-led, preferring instead to concentrate on the glamourisation of these jobs and the lifestyle they offer/entail. He castigates 'other industrial interests', particularly those in the leisure industry and service sector "for encouraging the recreational habits of the younger generation" (Ijiri 1990: 39). He is wrong, however, in believing that the 'life begins at five' generation are dissolute young Japanese doing part-time or temporary work. Consistent with the statistics which indicate that work is not an end in itself to an increasing number of Japanese, the employees at GA, all of them highly trained full-time professionals, made perfectly clear they carefully guard their time after five o'clock (3.3).

---

[14]Recruit is the leading company in this industry, and Ijiri's polemic is heightened by the Recruit scandal, which occurred just before he wrote this paper, and whose name actually appears in the Japanese title of the paper. Kent (1992) gives a brief outline of the Recruit scandal as part of a sociological analysis of public reactions to the scandal.

[15]The work ethics which Ijiri states as having been vulgarized are described by him through the negative description of emerging work ethics. He writes, "I cannot sympathize with the view that a job is a means of making money and nothing more. This mentality reduces work to slave labour that is devoid of dignity and other non-monetary rewards. It negates the possibility that productive activity can be enjoyable and offer something to live for...Until today, the Japanese have been inclined to view productive activity as work rather than labour. They have seen work as a form of discipline more than forced toil, as expounded by the thinker Ishida Baigan [1685-1744]. When people work to train themselves, it does not matter what job they do. Provided that they work diligently, any occupation becomes a sacred calling" (*Ijiri 1990: 36*). Bellah (1985) discusses the significance of Ishida Baigan on post-WWII Japanese work ethics.

Ijiri accuses recruitment magazines of glamourizing working practices which allow individuals to place other aspects of their lives ahead of work, legitimizing the ethic that work is a means to an end, not an end in itself. The magazines stress the flexibility of these working practices, rather than their insecurity, but this is not particularly disenginuous. In the aftermath of the Bubble, nobody believes that any job guarantees security, and everybody feels exploited and cheated. Consequently, even those who have the choice are more than happy to trade 'insecurity' for 'flexibility' :

> Recruit's *B-ing*, which specializes in job listings for people making mid-career job changes, featured a series of articles in its August 9, 1990 issue under the general heading "A Farewell to Overtime". The section urges readers to "Switch jobs and make ¥30,000 a month more while working 20 hours less."...*Torabayu*...aimed at young women, featured in its August 3 issue, a comparison of the wages of young women and middle-aged men. Taking jabs at older male workers, the section proclaimed...that many men have no meaningful work to occupy their time, and cannot, despite long years of service, operate high-tech machines, like computers...Glancing through *Torabayu's* table of contents for its August 17 and 24 issues, I found the following entries: "Jobs with companies that have at least two full days off a week." "Start your work day at 9:30 a.m. or later." Work only three days a week." "Jobs that require only five working hours a day.", and "Avoid the crowds by taking weekdays off: Jobs at companies with at least one day off a month in addition to weekends and holidays." (*Ijiri 1990: 36*).

What employees are after is not always flexibility *per se*, but empowerment. Signs of the new individualism are most evident in the desire among people, not to shy away from work, but to set their own life goals, and be rewarded for their ability and their hard work. In the absence of being able to do these things, they look for other arenas for recognition and satisfaction, outside the workplace (6.1). In the aftermath of the Bubble, not only does a job with a large corporation not guarantee security, as Matsuda-san, President of GA, pointed out (3.4), more and more young people regard large companies as unable or unwilling to offer training, responsibility, or opportunities for career advancement (3.4). On the contrary, young people feel that they will be required to conform for reasons they don't support, will be trained as and when it suits the company, and will have to wait for years for responsibility, status, and reward.

Ijiri (1990) describes a television programme he watched, in which a number of middle-aged salarymen and university students discussed employment and lifetime goals. Watching the programme Ijiri tells us how be became very irritated and indignant at the attitude of the students:

> The students rattled off what they wanted in a job: good pay, plenty of holidays, no overtime. The veterans snarled back that the youngsters were still wet behind the ears and life was no laughing matter (*Ijiri 1990: 37*).

What upset Ijiri was not only what the students were saying, but how they were saying it. He reflects: "[T]hey were vulgar...not intentionally rude; they were simply unable to communicate in thoughtful language...[which]...reveals distorted attitudes" (Ijiri 1990: 37). I did not see the programme, but I have heard enough complaints about the way young Japanese use the language and I am familiar enough with the way they use the language, to know that when he says they are "simply unable to communicate in thoughtful language", 'thoughtful' means 'reverential', or with due respect, and their 'inability' does not refer to grammatical conventions pertaining to station not being observed. It more often than not refers to the manner in which young people openly disagree and question. Talk of a lack of politeness in most cases like this does not refer to a habit of speaking using informal grammatical forms, which is rarely the case, but refers to a lack of discretion in following social conventions about what should and should not be said (Miller 1967; Nakane 1970).

Young people are not deliberately impolite in most cases, but their perception of themselves and their relationships to others, particularly seniors of a significant age difference, creates an impression of disrespect in the older person because of the familiarity and openness with which the younger speaker expresses themself. This openness is the students expressing their individuality (*kosei wo dasu*).

Another example of changing attitudes is revealed in a major feature article in the 'Business, Culture, and Entertainment' weekly magazine, Spa!, titled 'Japan's Generation X: The weird generation that avoids friction (*Nihon han jenereishon X: masatsu kaihi sedai no bukimi*)' (Shuukan Spa 3/8/94). The report, conducted by the magazine, quotes the complaints of employees in supervisory positions about their young subordinates in various types of established Japanese companies of the type which are trying to restructure. The article then quotes a number of these maligned young men and women, before finishing up with the opinions and exhortations of a number of 'experts'. The report begins with the following introduction:

> When you look at the new generation of salarymen and OL's[16], isn't there something you just don't understand? During meetings they just sit there in silence. Even when going out drinking, they just nod and make all the right noises, never giving their own opinions...Are we seeing the rapid rise of a type of person who avoids any confrontation, while fervently protecting their own little worlds? (*Shuukan Spa 3/8/94: 39; my translation*).

Typical complaints are:

> They're very good at making all the right noises, but when it comes to talking about themselves, or about their own ideas, it's all vague and insincere (*Shuukan Spa 3/8/94: 39*).[17]

> They push ahead stubbornly with their own way of doing things, which is not necessarily a bad thing. But why do they say something like 'Really?' if they have no intention of taking their supervisor's advice? Cases like this are extremely common. When a supervisor draws their attention to their conduct, their reply is submissive, but it still doesn't change their attitude. Bank employee 39 (*Shuukan Spa 3/8/94: 40*).

> It's like they've just come down off a mountain. Supervisors are at a loss for words when a subordinate with a non-confrontational face behaves in such a contradictory way. Publishing employee 30 (*Shuukan Spa 3/8/94: 40*).

Replies to these comments by the young people in question included the following:

> In the current recession, a lot of older guys are getting the push in the restructuring (*risutora de*), yeh? These guys look at us in our situation and are envious, so they come down on us. Despite the fact that our attitude (*kansei*) is better suited to life such as it is now (*fukyō no toki koso bokura no kansei wo ikashita hō ga ii*), they don't understand. Department store employee. Male. 25 (*Shuukan Spa 3/8/94: 41*).

> Despite having a break at the weekend being a natural right (*tōzen no kenri*), we're always asked why we want to have a break. Insurance employee. Female.22 (*Shuukan Spa 3/8/94: 41*).

> For older men, the company is the centre of their life. It's not like that anymore, not to that extent (*sono teidō de wa naku*) Hotel. Female.23. (*Shuukan Spa 3/8/94: 41*).

> They think an adult is supposed to be somebody whose mind yields to some kind of society or organization. Factory worker. Male. 22 (*Shuukan Spa 3/8/94: 41*).

> Supervisors start from the beginning with the attitude that things are going badly, which they are these days. That's why we resign ourselves to rejecting communicating with them, to avoid any antagonism. Chemical company employee. Male. 25 (*Shuukan Spa 3/8/94: 41*).

> With *tanin* there is no chance of understanding. I wouldn't dare to create a confrontation. Food company employee. Female. 23 (*Shuukan Spa 3/8/94: 41*).[18]

---

[16]OLs are 'office ladies'. Office Ladies in Japan are the predominantly young, single women, who primarily undertake general administrative duties with little or no responsibility.

[17]All quotes my translations.

[18]*Tanin* is a word with a number of meanings, all referring to 'other people' in various ways. The subject of *tanin* is dealt with in 4.3 and 7.2).

Many examples are given of the unwillingness of young men to join in after-work drinking. These youths are polite and 'make the right noises (*aisatsu*)', but don't really join in. They come across as strange and false. What these young employees have to say in response to these criticisms is revealing:

> I only drink Oolong tea. I drink it everyday. At work, everyday, five or six guys pile into a bar; you know, colleagues. All they do is grumble about work, getting the stress out of their systems. Distribution. Male. 25 (*Shuukan Spa 3/8/94: 43*).
>
> When I go drinking with colleagues from work, we never talk about work. We just get drunk and talk a load of rubbish. When the old guys pour alcohol down their throats, the conversation just dribbles on, the same topics being repeated time after time. Speaking honestly, it's difficult to listen to all that stuff, having to sit there for ages listening to the old guys railing against everything. Us at the bottom just get together ourselves and make a noise. That's where we get our energy for the following day. Department store. Male. 22 (*Shuukan Supa 3/8/94: 43*).
>
> The sermons I hate. Isn't there more than one way to go drinking with your colleagues and have a good chat together? As far as our attitude to drinking goes, it's an unexplainable good feeling. Without thinking too deeply about it, you can open your heart. However, this is something limited to your *miuchi*. With *miuchi* even if you make a big deal about something and there is no progress, it's OK. When it's over, you feel refreshed and things are OK for a while. Department store. Male 22 (*Shuukan Spa 3/8/94: 43*).[19]

The last two quotes actually describe what these young people appear to be rebelling against: the culture of drinking with colleagues after work. Rather than a contradiction, this suggests that it is not the idea of relaxing with colleagues after work which they resent, but instead, they want to choose whom they relax with. The culture of after-work drinking (*o sake no nomikata*) is being shunned by young Japanese men, not because they do not drink, or see after-work drinking as strange, but because they do not want to drink with their seniors at work, resenting the fact that their prospects are dependent as much on their willingness to kow-tow after work, as in the workplace. Instead, they prefer to mingle with who they choose: colleagues from work, friends from other companies, friends who work part-time or who are unemployed, and women. The similarity of view with the employees at GA is striking, only at GA these attitudes are enshrined in the work ethics and practices of the company. Young Japanese like these discussed in the Spa! article have to look outside the workplace to 'be themselves' and express their individuality, a trend which Miyanaga (1990) saw developing in the 1980s (6.1).

The 'diagnoses' of the 'experts' present familiar themes as to why young Japanese are perceived as not accepting established work ethics and codes of conduct. A psychiatrist finds the root cause in the education system, and that young people organize themselves very much in groups, having the effect of coercing young people to hide their true feelings in order to conform. Otherwise, he says, "they will be branded as weird and stigmatized (*hen na yatsu to mirarete ijimerarerii*)". This is arguably true, but it does not explain their desire to express their individuality through choosing to drink with colleagues and friends from outside the workplace. The fact of the matter is that they *are* stigmatized and branded as 'weird' because they are trying to express their individuality (*kosei wo dasu*). They are in fact transgressing the ethics and practices of their seniors, who are themselves coerced to conform to fixed standards through group membership. The actions of the young Japanese indicates a degree of independent thinking which is perceived as different and therefore weird. Their seemingly duplicitous behaviour derives from the fact that they are

[19] *Miuchi* is discussed in 4.3.

trying to conform as much as possible, but are both unable to and unwilling to. Many young employees in the same position feel that there is nothing to be gained by nurturing workplace relationships with seniors after work, knowing that fundamental changes are underway. As one of the young employees remarked: "our attitude is better suited to life such as it is now (*fukyō no toki koso bokura no kansei wo ikashita hō ga ii*)".

Another of the experts, a company personnel department head, locates the problem in young people not having 'a sense of a vested interest (*mottomo junyō na no wa tōjisha ishiki wo motaseru to iu koto desu*)' (Shuukan Spa 3/8/94: 47). He begins by saying "At the present time, these young people are unable to adapt to company practices (*kaisha sōshiki*)", and that "if supervisors who are training up subordinates think about it, this situation is not at all unnatural...not an unexpected state of affairs" (Shuukan Spa 3/8/94: 47). The implication is that supervisors are not managing to get through to their subordinates. It is to be expected that one or two new recruits may turn out to be unsuitable and that a supervisor might have trouble with them, but what this report suggests is that something more fundamental is occurring. The personnel director is aware of this when he says:

> Whatever is to be done, the fact is that the numbers of these young people are multiplying rapidly, and whatever happens, these young people will come to dominate society (*Shuukan Spa! 3/8/94: 47; my translation*).

What he argues they are missing, apart from a sense of a vested interest, is a sense of responsibility for something larger than themselves, and to achieve this, "more important than knowledge or experience is the manifestation of strength, *chikara wo hasshi suru*, which must always be at the front of one's mind". Clearly, the personnel director regards 'strength' to conform, rather than skills or ability as most important, indicating how entrenched work ethics which require an employee to 'suppress their self' are (4.3). For him, the key is to somehow tap in to the vitality and inspiration (*mukiryoku, mukandō ningen nanka ja nai*) these people seem to display in their private life (*puraibetto bubun*), but his answer does not suggest that this should be achieved by harnessing the source of this vitality: their individuality (*kosei*). He then asks the question, "What do we have to do to raise this ability and energy as far as a sense of a vested interest?" It is important to note that he says 'as far as a sense of vested interest', for any further would be a manifestation of individuality, of self-interest, and of weakness, not a manifestation of strength. He answers his question by advocating a return to the past:

> We have to harness it to the guiding codes of those who are senior (*senpaitachi no gaido no yarikata ni kakatteiru*), for we were raised by our seniors (*senpai*) (*Shuukan Spa! 3/8/94: 47; my translation*).

Within a rigid company workplace environment, structured by working practices and work ethics associated with 'the group model of Japanese society' (Befu 1980), slight differences in ethical and aesthetic sensibilities, revealed through non-conformity to *seken nami* standards, become polarized (6.1). The picture which emerges from this report in Spa! is one of confusion and uncertainty, and a sign that young Japanese with qualifiably different values, different goals, and different ways of thinking, are emerging. As we saw amongst the employees at GA, there is difference within these workplaces, but unlike GA, difference is not recognised or encouraged, it is stigmatised. For all the talk about individuality in the workplace, the evidence provided by the Spa! article is that there is a

lack of will among senior management in Japan to implement the kind of organisational structure and command structure that there is at GA. What is surprising to me, is that none of the 'experts' the magazine drafted in to comment on these young Japanese recognised what is happening, and against all the talk of a need to move forward, redefining workplace ethics and practices, they advocated a return to the past. The personnel director is both right and wrong when he says the young employees have no sense of a vested interest or responsibility. He is right that they have no sense of vested interest *in the workplace*, but he is mistaken to imagine that they have no vested interest at all. Their vested interest lies in their individual lives outside the workplace.

The assertiveness and independence of thought which is being encouraged on the one hand in the rhetoric of the debates on reform, and which is being established in companies like GA and in the flexible economy, is being criticised on the other. This confusion manifests itself in the workplace and is causing problems, as the Spa! report suggests. As to whether the students in the TV debate Ijiri mentioned are unaware of the conventions which Ijiri regards as important, I would argue that they are aware of them, but they do not interpret their relationship to the salarymen in the same way as Ijiri does, or the salarymen do, which is a manifestation of changing values. Glamourizing flexible working practices, emphasizing the personal gains to be had from them, belittling the practices and attitudes of middle-aged company employees, all indicates a shift in aesthetic and ethical priorities. What Ijiri interprets as an 'inability to communicate in thoughtful language', is a language communicated thoughtfully, but one that adheres to a different set of ethical and aesthetic priorities. The portrayal of middle-aged salarymen, held up for ridicule in a young women's employment magazine, very probably reflects the opinions of the vast majority of young Japanese women who are forced to put up with the demeaning attitudes and attention of some of these men, under the kinds of working conditions Ijiri advocates. If his indignation is roused by the barbed humour of *Torabaiyu* magazine, what would he make of the brochures published by Pasona, which I discussed in 5.2? The brochures aimed at those who may be thinking of registering for temporary work with Pasona stress the flexibility and control over one's life which temporary employment gives. They stress the advantages of a clear cut job description and hours, drawing the attention to the benefits and salary which Pasona can offer.

*******

Changing workplace ethics can also be observed in changes to recruitment practices as well. Strict adherence to consensual decision-making practices governed by age/seniority hierarchy militates against independent thinking and assertive employees (Nakane 1970; Miyanaga 1991) and favours the opposite. A certain type of employee has been considered most suitable, but now a different type of employee is required. As Atsushi Seike, a professor of labour economics at Keio University, succinctly put it:

> Companies always face two risks in hiring employees: the risk of hiring incompetent people and the risk of missing competent people. The former risk is very serious under long-term employment. As a result, Japanese companies have tended to resort to hiring low-risk people who would be willing to work diligently and obediently for them. Now, though, the risk of missing capable people is greater. Companies need to reach out to innovative people. (*Nikkei Weekly* 26/8/96).

The importance of innovative people is now widely recognized, but although companies are making tentative steps to restructure recruiting procedures to attract and catch personnel who are more assertive and independent thinking, the transition will take time. Both government officials and independent analysts have said that there is a gap between what companies require and what prospective employees have to offer in terms of skills, attitudes, and what they are prepared to do. As a working culture which favours immobility begins to embrace mobility, encouraged by legislation and changing ethics and practices, the right people will increasingly find the right jobs. As we saw at GA, individuality and sense of self is engendered by the organisational structure and command structure of the company. As long as company structures favour strict hierarchical relations and the ethic of 'suppress the self (*kojin wo osaeru*)' or 'kill the self (*jibun wo korosu*)' instead of 'express the self (*kosei wo dasu / jibun wo dasu*)', individuality will not be accepted in the workplace, and employees will increasingly become indifferent and less motivated.

In terms of skills and self-presentation, there are signs that high school students are still being taught to be, and university students are still preparing themselves to be compliant 'do-as-they're-told-don't-ask-any-questions-or-make-any-suggestions' types of employees. Whether the more independent-thinking high school students are being discriminated against is difficult to tell. The school system still selects those students who simply copy and memorize, and discriminates against those who question and query, and this is a cause for concern among employers across the industrial spectrum. Goodman's (1989) work on 'returnee school children (*kikoku shijo*) certainly indicated this. These young Japanese returning from abroad are well-suited to the new challenges, but often shun the corporate jobs because they still, justifiably, fear discrimination. I heard the complaint that new recruits these days are timid and without motivation or any initiative from staff working in companies of all sizes. Yet, in all the debates about nurturing individual potential and relocating responsibility and accountability within the workplace, it is rare to hear the opposing of 'group-oriented' and 'individual-oriented' in discussion. I have heard 'assertive' linked to 'aggressive' and then opposed to 'co-operative', but this is also rare. What is more common is the contradiction that arises when different debates are considered together. Opinions that young Japanese are far more 'individualistic' and assertive are just as widespread as those which argue that they are compliant automatons who never have an original thought in their head, products of an education system which is increasingly out-of-step with the needs of industry and the economy. If the professor of economics at Keio University is right, however, the opinion that all new recruits are lacklustre and timid confirms that all the compliant students have tended to be recruited while all the assertive ones are passed over. Yet, although there may be an element of truth in this, even 'compliant' and 'assertive' cannot unproblematically be opposed, as the example of the young employees in the Spa! article confirms.

*******

Isn't it unrealistic to talk of giving employees more time off, and saying that companies should be more responsible to their suppliers and to the environment, in a period of economic difficulty? Even

if Japan were not in a deep recession, would it still make good business sense? In all the advanced industrialised nations, the cost of a number of previously unquantifiable variables, 'unanalysables', are beginning to be included in monetary flow calculations, not just at the level of company performance, but also at the level of GNP. The cost of damage and depletion to resources or the environment has been debated for some time now, but is only now entering the economic equation. Now, the cost of unhappiness and satisfaction is also beginning to enter the theoretical sphere. It is increasingly recognized that the cost benefits of motivating a workforce and of understanding the values behind those motivations might be significant. Economic science is embracing the nebulous subject of Happiness (Independent 21/2/96).[20] With the spoils of the national goal of catching up and overtaking the other advanced industrial nations seemingly escaping along with the air from the bursting Bubble, together with disillusionment with the government, the bureaucracy, and 'corporate-centrism', motivating the workforce has become a priority, hence talk of a 'people-centred' society, an 'individual and family-centred' society', and the centrality of 'lifestyle' in political and economic rhetoric in Japan in the aftermath of the Bubble.[21] It is particularly in the realm of motivations and rewards that we see 'top-down' programmes and 'bottom-up' processes negotiating the way forward

So far, 'top-down' programmes to establish and nurture individuality in the workplace have not emerged much further than the arena of rhetoric and debate, as the example of the companies in the Spa! article suggest, and the cases of some of the party goers I introduce in the next chapter attest. Companies like GA indicate that 'top-down' programmes are likely to emerge more successfully through new businesses. In the meantime, individuality is being engendered, legitimated, and institutionalised in the flexible economy. The development of the flexible economy in Japan is a dynamic flux of both piecemeal 'top-down' planning and 'bottom-up' momentum: Part planned in response to the Bubble collapse, recession, and long-term economic outlook, part fall-out from the Bubble collapse and the recession. Confusion and misunderstanding is rife, and talk of an education system which is not preparing young Japanese for the tasks and the society ahead is not untrue. But whether working for a company like GA which engenders and nurtures individuality through the organisational structure and command structure, or, as we shall discover in the next chapter, whether working for an established company and looking outside the company for their future, or forced to think for oneself in a nascent flexible economy, as one of the 'experts' in the Spa! article noted, these selves will come to dominate society. The citizens who will run the economy and inhabit the 'people-centred' Japan in the twenty-first century are already here, preparing themselves and establishing their selves for the journey ahead.

*******

[20] *'Quality of Life Enters the Balance Sheets'. Independent 21/2/96*

[21] The rhetoric surrounding *kokusaika*, 'internationalization', springs to mind when the Japanese government coins the phrase *seikatsu taikoku*, 'lifestyle superpower', to capture its vision of Japan in the future. This is because both phrases never really seem to move from the level of rhetorical. Yet for all the complexity and apparent contradictions in the rhetoric of *kokusaika*, it signalled recognition of a need.

# 6. A New Community

## 1) Passive Individualism and the Privatisation of Groups: A Half-Way House?
## 2) The Redefining and Resurgence of Community
## 3) Strategies of Capture
## 4) The Feeling of Community: The Meaning of Community

This chapter introduces the young people in Tokyo who associate themselves with the underground dance music movement, demonstrating through this and the following chapter that the values and attitudes of these young people, and the relationships between individual selves and collective selves among them, are the same as those which I described in the case of GA, indicating that the same values and ideas about individual selves and collective selves are developing in the 'spaces' (Harvey 1990) being opened up by the flexible economy, as those being implemented by established companies. What is in effect a 'top down' process in the case of GA and industry in general, is being accompanied by a 'bottom up' process within the turbulence created by the collapse of the Bubble.

Section One considers a work on Individualism (Miyanaga 1991), which suggests that a phenomenon of 'passive individualism' began to develop in the 1980s, and that this is beginning a shift away from task-orientated affiliated groups, such as companies, as the primary loci of selfhood in Japan, to groups formed on the basis of voluntary, personal commitment. This development is consistent with the shift in attitudes which regards work as a means to an end rather than an end itself, revealed through the belief that leisure is regarded as more important than work by an increasing majority of the population. This trend is a driving force behind the move from what is regarded as a 'company-centred' society to a 'people-centred' society. Miyanaga's model of 'private groups' looks to be one way that a shift from a 'company-centred' society to a 'people-centred' society is developing. Her 'private group' theory appears to be a kind of halfway stage between individual selves and collective selves as constituted within 'the group model of Japanese society' (Befu 1980a, 1980b), and individual selves and collective selves constituted in the kind of organisational structure at GA. It is clear from the example of GA, the example of the young employees in established companies interviewed in Spa!, from the example of the temps at Pasona, from the example of the flexible economy in general, and with companies in general looking to nurture individuality and reduce their involvement in the lives of their employees, that a shift from a 'company-centred' society to a 'people-centred' society is underway, and that this shift can be understood as a redefinition of individual selves and collective selves engendered by the

recognition and legitimation of individuality (*kosei*).

The workplace has been, and still is, the primary nodal point of identity in Japan, even though there is a trend away from this with work increasingly being regarded as a means to an end rather than an end in itself, and with the move from a 'company-centred' society towards a 'people-centred' society. It is changes in workplace ethics and practice which is allowing individuality to emerge, and which is legitimating a redefinition of individual selves and collective selves on the basis of an ethics of individuality. Consequently, it is from the position of the workplace that I proceed to investigate the redefinition of selves.

Underground dance music Techno parties are, I will argue, 'private groups', but of a sufficient size to throw individual social expectations into relief, where they can become objectified and acquire an authority to establish and legitimate selves. In this way, I argue that these parties operate to set guidelines for thought and action at the level of the individual and at the level of community, established and negotiated through individual selves. In **5.4**, the personnel director who was interviewed in the Spa! article commented that companies need to 'tap into the vitality and inspiration young people display in their private lives'. This vitality and inspiration is 'individuality (*kosei*)', engendered through a nascent ethics of individuality, negotiated and established in 'private groups'. The indications from this research are that these 'private groups' do fulfil a legitimating and authorising role in this way. However, further research is required to demonstrate how this happens.

Section Two provides a brief introduction to the development of Techno music, drawing attention to the way it facilitates the strengthening of both individuality and community in a given setting. Section Three details the 'strategies of capture' (Cohen and Rapport 1995) used to collect data on the party-goers, and to present it to the reader in a way that captures the tapestry of their lives. I opted for a 'concatenation of evocations', extended passages of descriptive prose, arbitrarily arranged to give the reader both a picture and a feel for the lives of these Children of the Bubble. These are then followed with a review of the interviewee's lifecourses through the post-Bubble landscape, looking for similarities and differences.

The chapter ends by considering what it is about these parties that makes people want to attend. When people enter groups voluntarily, there has to be something that makes them feel good about being part of such a community. After considering the data collected among the party-goers, I contend that, what feels 'good' and 'bad' is an indication of what people regard as 'right' and 'wrong', and that it is on the basis of that which is regarded as Good and Bad, that a nascent ethics of Right and Wrong emerges within these 'private groups'.

I do not undertake an analysis of underground dance music Techno parties as a kind of subculture in the manner of Hebdige (1979) or McRobbie (1994), but as one example of a nationwide development in Japan of establishing selves outside the workplace through 'private groups' (Miyanaga 1991), entered voluntarily, on the basis of personal commitment.

*******

### 6.1) Passive Individualism and the Privatisation of Groups: A Half Way House?

Miyanaga (1991) presents a thesis of 'emerging individualism'. Never saying what constitutes individualism, she begins by saying that individualism in Japan has always been an option, but one which is regarded as a deviance from the norm and which consigns persons to live in a 'cultural vacuum' (Miyanaga 1991: 73). She discusses individualism in two ways, both as deviance from the mainstream. One as 'active individualism', the other as 'passive individualism'.

Active individualists, she argues, have existed since 'the beginning of the century' and have lived on the periphery of Japanese society, trying to establish their own values (Miyanaga 1991: 128). If and when they become successful, these active individuals have invariably moved into the mainstream to gain respect and status, bringing wealth and prosperity with them. This process, Miyanaga states: "has given a fundamental stability to Japanese society" (Miyanaga 1991: 124). She describes how individualism, which could only exist on the periphery of society, has, until the mid Eighties, been sucked into the mainstream as the 'individualistic' entrepreneurs sought status and prestige, not just capital reward:

> A member of a powerful and established organisation gains a share of the prestige of his company...Individuals on the periphery, having no powerful organisation to identify with cannot achieve the same level of prestige...Money can buy many things, but not respect from others. In order for the wealthy outside the economic mainstream to gain respect, they must, in effect enter the mainstream by constructing their own corporations built on groupist structures. In this traditional cycle in the modern Japanese economy, entrepreneurs on the periphery willingly give up their ['individuality'] in order to gain status in the mainstream (*Miyanaga 1991: 24*).

According to Miyanaga, however, there was a trend through the 1980s of these active individualists remaining on the periphery rather than moving into the mainstream in order to gain status and prestige. This was part of the initial shift to post-Fordist production (**5.2**), which favoured small, flexible companies which could develop and market new products quickly, stealing a march on the larger enterprises, who could not respond to technological innovations or market trends so quickly. Although this development was small, Miyanaga argues that a new relationship between these small, predominantly hi-tech companies run by individualists and the larger established companies began to develop, becoming more contractual and less based on 'quasi-kinship relationships'. GA fits into this category.

Following the slowdown of the global economy in the 1970s, the shift to a post-Fordist production philosophy of greater product diversity and smaller production runs also led to pronouncements in Japan that the new breed of individualistic Japanese, popularly known as the *shin jinrui* (the new breed)[1] (**5.4**), would be ideally suited for the production goals which the established companies were beginning to address. Miyanaga argues that the term *shin jinrui* was regarded positively when it first emerged in the mid-Eighties, with the Chairmen of companies such as NTT and Daiwa Securities having high expectations of the 'new breed'.

---

[1]'New Breed' is the usual translation for *shin jinrui*. Literally, *shin jinrui* means 'new type of person'.

According to Miyanaga, the high expectations of the *shin jinrui* failed to materialize, which she attributes to a number of reasons. Instead of their showing initiative and being influential, the need for them to fit in and conform reduced them to being noncommittal and withdrawn. Consequently, *shin jinrui* took on a negative connotation, as elder Japanese, notably their seniors in the workplace, regarded them as uncommitted and work shy. Miyanaga notes, however, that rather than being work shy, they were the first generation to shun corporate loyalty.

Miyanaga describes this withdrawal as an individualism which manifests itself passively, which she terms 'passive individualism', and which leads to what she regards as a 'privatisation of groups':

> Instead of expressing their frustrations in an active effort to change work conditions, the younger generation has tended to withdraw into small groups. They ignore the larger categories of group, even that of 'Japan'...Reduced corporate loyalty and the privatisation of groups may be defined as passive individualism (*Miyanaga 1991: 80*).

The widespread development of 'private groups' has led, Miyanaga tells us, "to a separation of informal relationships and formal social organisation" (Miyanaga 1991: 88). This has led to Japanese youth being accused of being 'masked', of not revealing their true selves: "so that to their bosses, they are 'strangers whenever they meet".[2] Using Goffman's (1959) term, Miyanaga argues that the youths shun the 'interactional rituals' of the mainstream, such as social drinking. She theorizes that this is due to young Japanese not being educated in these interactional rituals. However, I do not agree with her on this. Rather, young Japanese, in keeping with her 'private group' explanation, are developing their own social conventions within their 'private groups' outside the workplace or, as is suggested in the example of the young employees in the Spa! article (5.4).

Passive individualism, Miyanaga continues, had been tamed and accepted, integrated into the mainstream. Together with the scorn for the *shin jinrui* which grew towards the end of the 1980s, marking the shunning of individualism in the workplace after a brief courtship:

> individualism among the Japanese youth is conceived to be passive. It has withdrawn from the public domain of society to privacy, is meekly practiced in the work situation, and is not at all revolutionary in any sense (*Miyanaga 1991: 100*).

However, Miyanaga concludes by saying that passive individualism is a latent force:

> Passive individualism creates and accelerates existing structural pluralism against cohesion based on nationalism, thus undermining the ideology of the homogeneous Japanese culture on which the modern culture...depends. The strength of passive individualism is found in its position in the workforce in the mainstream...When structural pluralism is fully expressed...passive individualism will create a momentum for structural strange (*Miyanaga 1991: 100*).

Writing in the late 1980s, Miyanaga tells us that individualism was still viewed as deviant behaviour. This was compounded by the opinion that 'passive individualism' was destructive. Yet, as Miyanaga emphasises, these passive individualists were an increasing number of the mainstream, shunning corporate centrism and the workplace as the centre of their lives, instead often forming small, private, work-unrelated groups. Miyanaga refers to this trend as 'family-centrism', as many of these passive individualists are young married salarymen and workers who made their families the centre of their lives.

---

[2]Miyanaga points out, however, that: "the proponents of groupism speak as if their own actions are not 'masked' in any way" (Miyanaga 1993: 89).

Miyanaga's term 'family centrism' tells us that during the late 1980s, prior to the Bubble collapse, the recession and the current long-term economic outlook, she regarded the privatisation of groups as essentially a case of young married salarymen, not so much turning their backs on their companies as making the decision to spend time with their wives and young children, unlike their own fathers and many of their older colleagues. Not surprisingly, this tended to sour relations with senior colleagues at work. Leaving early to be with the family, however, could not easily be criticised. In the late Eighties, the caring, family-orientated New Man image was as evident in Japan as in every other advanced industrial economy. Aspiring 'New Men' were resented in the workplace but lauded outside, and consequently could not easily be criticised within the workplace. Clearly, in the late Eighties, even though the economy was doing well, as I indicated in 1.1 there was growing dissatisfaction among employees with the demands companies made on their lives, fuelled by the belief that the fruits of Japan's economic success were not filtering down to the employees. This was a time when the strains put on the biological family unit by companies was making news. The practices of *tenzoku* and *shukkō*, sudden transfers to other company sites, often without consultation (Hamada 1992), were being increasingly criticised by the public and in the press in the late Eighties, with employees beginning to refuse to uproot their families, or instigating legal proceedings against their company, practices unheard of a few years before. This dissatisfaction can be regarded as an indication that a conflict of values was beginning to develop within the mainstream, expressed within the workplace, according to Miyanaga's terms, as passive individualism, and outside it through the forming of 'private' groups.

Writing prior to the Bubble collapse, the recession, and the current economic situation, Miyanaga argues that individualism, as 'passive individualism', was regarded as a threat to corporate loyalty and the particular forms of collective group orientation described by Befu (1980) as 'the group model of Japanese society'. Her description of young employees withdrawing from the work group, matches perfectly the description of the employees labelled Generation X six years later in the Spa! (1994) article, who were accused of being withdrawn and not revealing their true selves, and choosing to do what they want and associate with who they please after work, instead of drinking and socialising with their workgroup peers and *senpai*.

Before discussing how Miyanaga's thesis relates to post-Bubble Japan, and whether it might describe a half-way stage, I want to focus on two problems, both to do with 'passive individualism'. First of all, there is the word 'passive' itself. I understand why Miyanaga chose the word, in order to describe the non-confrontational attitude of the employees. However, a 'withdrawal', as she describes it, has to be regarded as a premeditative act, with consequences. This is not simply a question of semantics. The formation of 'private groups', entered voluntarily on the basis of personal commitment, to use Miyanaga's words, is also a premeditated act. What appears as withdrawal, looking from the position of the workplace, is involvement and participation elsewhere. Secondly, Miyanaga tells us: "I have called the withdrawal from corporate loyalty a form of passive individualism, because it is not an intentional rebellion against mainstream values" (Miyanaga 1991: 128). The first question that needs to be asked is: what are mainstream values? I would argue that corporate centrism and the ideology of 'company as family' were certainly the *dominant* values at the

time Miyanaga was writing. In which case, a withdrawal from corporate loyalty and the formation of private groups clearly is a rebellion against 'dominant' values. Such a withdrawal and formation of 'private' groups would also be a rebellion against the values and practices of the work-team or company, in most cases at the time. The question which remains, then, is: were the values of the majority different to the dominant values? At the time Miyanaga was writing, although there clearly was a trend away from corporate centrism and the ideology of 'company as family', it had not reached a point where it can be said that 'family centrism' or 'private groups' had supplanted 'corporate centrism' and the dominance of work orientated groups in the informal relationships of the majority of employees in Japan. Miyanaga evidently required her young employees to express their frustrations in an active effort to change work conditions (Miyanaga 1991: 80) before she would regard them as 'active individualists', or as rebelling.

Miyanaga's idea of the 'privatisation of groups' describes the situation at GA well, where there has been a separation of informal relationships and the work place. At GA, corporate loyalty does not depend on the employees placing the workplace at the centre of their lives, with their loyalty being questioned if they form 'private groups'. On the contrary, loyalty derives from the company respecting the employee's privacy outside working hours. Miyanaga's thesis of emerging individualism does appear as a half-way house when looking at GA. Certainly we can see a separation of informal relationships and formal social organisation, but while I believe we can usefully continue to use the concept of the 'privatisation of groups' we cannot describe the employees at GA as 'passive individualists'. Everybody is not simply encouraged, but required by the organisational structure, command structure, the ethics and practices of the company, to act individually within the workplace. When we consider the situation in the Spa! article, Miyanaga's thesis appears less as a half-way stage. The examples provided in the Spa! article suggest that GA is the exception and Miyanaga's thesis is still the current state of affairs. However, while this may initially appear to be the case, structural changes to harness and encourage individualism are being implemented across the whole of the society of industry, both in established companies and among venture start-ups where companies like Nintendo provide a shining example. The actual examples described in the Spa! article support my assertion that Miyanaga's thesis is indeed a transitional stage. The attitudes and actions of the young employees, together with the dissatisfaction of their *senpai*, reveals workplaces in a state of flux and confusion, with misunderstanding and resentment rife throughout. These companies are experiencing very real problems as they try not only to accommodate young Japanese growing up with a different set of values and attitudes, but also to harness the individuality these young people display, while at the same time trying to maintain an organisational structure and command structure which is still in the interests of the majority of the employees. Difficult and painful for many older employees, the attitude of the young employees tells a different story. They confidently talk of having time on their side and of being in tune with the requirements of the country. They consider their private time a given and are both incredulous and dismissive of the idea that they should invest in nurturing relationships with their seniors outside working hours in order to secure their future. It is not that they refuse to in principle: the likely truth is, they know their future will be secured in other ways. Their view would not be out of

place at GA, where, as Shinkawa-san succinctly put it: "Work and private are completely separated".[3]

*******

[3]At the steel factory where I worked, at 5:30p.m. everything would stop and everybody would go their separate ways. If there was a job that needed finishing, somebody would stay behind and work, but only enough people to do the job. 'Company-centrism' (2.4) did not seem to characterise the steel factory, and does not seem to characterise many small workplaces in Japan. However, the notion of a separation of work and private is more to do with a change in how the self is constituted in Japan. The increased importance of the private domain, as one of the more visible characteristics of the shift from a 'company-centred' society to a 'people-centred' society, is itself an indication of the less readily visible process of a redefinition of selves which incorporates other parts of a person's life, whereby the self is not constituted almost exclusively through affiliation to the workplace, as has been the case in Japan in the post WWII period up until now, and as it was in the steel factory when I worked there, even though everybody goes their separate ways at 5:30p.m.

## 6.2) The Redefining and Resurgence of Community

At the time I was conducting fieldwork in 1995 and 1996, I identified three ways in which the new individualism was emerging. One way was in a company like GA, where the organisational structure and the command structure of the company frames and encourages individuality (*kosei*), through nurturing the creativity of the employees and investing them all individually with the responsibility for their work (3.2). Another way in which the new individualism is emerging can be seen in the examples of the young employees in the Spa! article (5.4), and as conceptualised in Miyanaga's (1991) thesis of 'passive individualism' and 'private groups'. Looking back from 1997, the developments described by Miyanaga and evident in the Spa! article, in 1994, indicate a transitional period, where many young Japanese employees, men and women, are having trouble adopting and accepting the working practices and codes of conduct of their companies, which are themselves trying to adjust in order to incorporate and harness their young employee's individuality. This is creating a conflict which is causing these young employees to appear non-committal and work-shy, rejecting practices such as socialising with their work groups. An example, which I have already discussed in 5.4, is male juniors shunning the drinking rituals which are an intrinsic part of working relationships, in what many young Japanese refer as 'up-down' companies (*jõge gaisha*), a reference to the strict hierarchical, factional (*habatsu*) structure of the post-war Japanese company described by Nakane (1970), Rohlen (1974), and Clark (1979). These young people, as well as withdrawing from work-related social activities, are displaying signs of their emerging individualism in two other identifiable ways. One is listening to the instructions or suggestions of a senior, acknowledging what has been said and then ignoring the advice or the instruction. The other is the formation of 'private groups' outside the workplace where they can express their individuality.

The third way in which the new individualism is emerging, is among those who are living and working in the spaces which are appearing as the flexible economy establishes itself. Part-time, temporary, and fixed-term contract work, often short, characterise the working practices of a flexible economy. Unlike the young employees in the 'up-down' companies, there seem to be no webs of responsibility or obligations attached to these kinds of working practices which require individual selves to 'suppress their selves', and consequently these young people appear to have very little constraints on their emerging individuality. Certainly they will have obligations to dispatch their duties efficiently and properly at work, but do these jobs "serve as a circle of emotional attachment or nodal point of identity" (Kondo 1990: 174) for these employees?

I have been saying how individual selves and collective selves cannot be separated, as they construct and define each other, and I have argued that individuality and community can only be described in terms of each other (3.6, 4.3). So, with a separation developing between informal relationships and formal social organisation, and with the workplace assuming a diminished

responsibility in the lives of individual selves, what kind of community do these increasing numbers of predominantly young Japanese belong to, and how does it provide a framework for referencing and legitimating their individuality in the absence of a framework provided by a company like GA?

When I was discussing the organisational structure and command structure in GA (3.2), I used Cohen's (1994) model, whereby individual selves are not only seen as "creatures of their social relationships [but are also] their orchestrators" (Cohen 1994: 93). Among the employees at GA, within an identifiable organisational structure and command structure, there was an identifiable discourse of individuality which indicated parameters for thought and action, so that a narrative of the relationship between individual selves and collective selves emerged. In this chapter, I will attempt to demonstrate that Miyanaga's 'private groups' provide a framework for constructing and legitimating the individuality of persons who currently have no other formal means of doing so, and that, in the case of those working in the spaces forming in the flexible economy, 'private' groups provide an index and reference for managing and negotiating other situations, including work. Miyanaga gives the example of a nuclear family as a 'private group', but I would question whether the nuclear family fits even Miyanaga's model. In post-Bubble Japan, there are many kinds of intimate 'private groups' which help people orientate themselves and each other, and as groups entered voluntarily on the basis of personal commitment, all 'private groups' are likely to be constituted by emerging individualists. This is the impression Miyanaga gives, and this is borne out by the example of the employees at GA, the employees in the Spa! article, the temps at Pasona, and the young people who attend Techno parties. But in any given example, what defines these selves, these emerging individualists? On the basis that individual selves and collective selves mutually constitute each other, an examination of a 'private group' should help us begin to answer that question.

The 'private' groups I chose to study are underground dance music Techno parties. These are referred to as Techno parties (*tekuno paatii*) in Japan. Techno is a particular genre of music which I will discuss below. The Techno party in Japan is, I will argue, a gathering of individual selves seeking to confirm and legitimate their individuality at the same time that they are enjoying themselves. What makes these events occasions to confirm and legitimate the self rather than occasions to simply have fun, such as golf, bowling, or going to see a film, is that enjoyment and satisfaction depend on a feeling of community, individuality, and mutual understanding being attained. This is achieved through coming together under a set of basic conditions which can be regarded as a set of identifiable practices and codes of conduct. As with the employees at GA, individuality and community are inseparable and mutually reinforce and define each other at these parties. Through participating and observing, I came to appreciate and understand how a Techno party is one setting which helps define, affirm and legitimate selves, individual and collective in post-Bubble Japan.

*******

Against a background of a history of electronic music being made and listened to in Japan, the underground dance music scene in Japan developed from young Japanese going abroad and bringing home what they had experienced in Europe, particularly Britain, from 1987 onwards. They did not buy it in the shops and bring it home, indeed they could not, and they were more keen than they had ever been to tell their friends about it and experience it with the people they cared about most and knew best. What these young Japanese experienced was not solely a musical performance, but also an affirmation of community, and individuality, from the feeling of energy and completeness which comes from common purpose and the reaffirmation of that purpose. The music is a facilitator, a means to establish and reaffirm ideas of what constitutes the individual self and collective selves in a given setting. Like many forms of performance in many cultures and societies all over the world (Chernoff 1979; Schechner and Appel 1990), whether it is pure entertainment or in some way socially significant, the dynamic relationship between the musicians and the other participants makes or breaks the performance and is crucial to a satisfactory result. At a House or Techno party, as with all performance of this kind, the crowd votes with its feet, but also, as with all performance of this kind, everybody is hopeful and expectant of a good performance, to achieve the desired reaffirmation of individual self and community. And when it comes, the feeling of satisfaction and unity is uplifting and life affirming.

In many ways a Techno party is a very old, and very tried and trusted formula. Writing about African music, Chernoff tells us:

> Africans who pay informed attention to the distinctive quality or style of a musical performance are concerned with the distinctive quality of its social setting, and they will even judge the music in terms of the success of the occasion. They expect the music to be responsive to the development of a situation, and they expect a musician to rely not only on his virtuosity, but also on his mood and sense of appropriateness...A musician orders or extends his rhythmic variations to suit the movement of the crowd of spectators and dancers...A true master must time his playing to replenish the dancers' physical and aesthetic energy at the right psychological moment...The intimacy of this communication means that a musician's creative contribution will stem from his continuing reflection on the progress of the situation as both a musical and a social event, and just as the music will tell a participant what to do, so will the situation provide a musician with an index of how well he may be doing (*1979: 65*).

It is beyond the scope of this thesis to explain the structure and content of House and Techno music in detail, or describe the development of House music from its initial beginnings in the black gay clubs of New York and Chicago in the 1970s and early 1980s, and from the desolate urban landscapes of Detroit, where a small group of black Americans spawned Techno music. Neither is it necessary to describe these histories fully, for what I will be concentrating on is not the music, but the individual selves and the particular structure of community which is facilitated by the music and engendered at these social gatherings in Japan.[4]

Derrick May, one of the progenitors of Techno music in Detroit, has said of the music: "computers and digital technology have given me the whole history of music at my fingertips".[5] Techno and House music are dance musics and are characterised by powerful rhythms, often very complex. Detroit Techno, still the definitive Techno music, is characterised by a tension between multiple rhythms, which are almost always uplifting, and melancholic strings and soundscapes, which gives the music an emotional depth and sincerity. The music works as a facilitator of social

[4]Collin (1997) provides a brief history of the music and the development of the dance music scene in Britain.
[5]Personal communication

interaction in exactly the same way as African drumming. Its makers, either the artist who produces the single 'tune', or the DJ[6] who weaves all the tunes together into a musical collage, shaping sounds, cutting and pasting, must keep at the front of their minds the task of taking the dancers and spectators on a musical, emotional and ultimately a social journey. Satisfaction for the participants comes from reaching a common understanding, which is the realisation that everyone, acting individually, as a collectivity, is necessary to bring about a satisfying conclusion. Inseparable from this realisation that others are important is the realisation that one's self is important and necessary. Experienced dancers and spectators understand this, and with the music as a facilitator, work to achieve it. I refer to Chernoff to describe how African music achieves its goal of facilitating and bringing about community and the affirmation of individual selves and collective selves:

> The steady changing dance is the best play. Sometimes a new dancer jumps into the dance. You have to keep on changing the beat until you see the beat that is good for his dance, and then you play that tune for him and he continues dancing...In African music, excellence arises when the combination of rhythms is translated into meaningful action...[using] repetition and change...Repetition is a way of emphasising and clarifying the drum language...Within the various ways that African music is repetitive, a drummer takes his time and repeats his styles to allow an interesting beat to continue, or a repeated rhythmic response provides a stable basis to clarify other rhythms which change...Repetition is the key factor which focuses the organisation of the rhythms in an ensemble piece. The repetition of a well chosen rhythm continually reaffirms the power of the music by locking that rhythm and the people who are listening or dancing to it, into a dynamic and open structure. The rhythms in African music may relate by cutting across each other or by calling or responding to each other, but in either case, because of the conflict of African cross-rhythms, the power of the music is not only captured by repetition, it is magnified...As the music engages people to participate by actively and continuously integrating various rhythms, a change at just the appropriate moment will pace people's exposure to the deeper relationships of the rhythms...In the control of his changes, the drummer directs the movement of the whole occasion...organising and focusing the expression of the power of both social and musical relationships (*Chernoff 1979: 111*).

Slowly through the 1970s and 1980s, a musical form developed which was structurally and aesthetically very similar to African musical idioms and musical idioms in other parts of the world which are used in a similar way. A DJ, in the case of House and Techno music, directs dancers and spectators towards a gestalt, by definition a whole which is greater than the sum of its parts. In the black gay clubs of New York and Chicago where the music first started, the hedonistic pursuit of pleasure was the goal, but when the music reached a certain point of development where it was able to bring about a feeling of gestalt among the participants, this pursuit of a gestalt became the goal of the participants. It was realised that a superior pleasure could be achieved through community, and here was a music which could achieve it. The DJs who first set the aesthetic form of the music by doing unheard of things to 1970s Disco records knew what they where doing. They understood how music can work to bring people together, to strengthen community, and consequently make everybody who participated feel stronger individually. In the black gay clubs of New York and Chicago, community was strong already, but here was a music which helped make being black and gay a little easier to cope with, and it was treasured for that.

Human societies all over the world know of the power of music. Many have evolved social gatherings where the specific purpose is to reaffirm and strengthen community through participation in music and dance. Rhythm and dance are recognised as having a powerful influence

---

[6]A Techno or House music DJ should not be compared to the person who plays records at wedding receptions, etc. This has nothing to do with ability *per se*. Techno and House music records are made as segments to be joined together into one piece of music. Also, by using electronic sounds which bear no resemblance to the sound of a given musical instrument, the listener has no reference point for a comparative judgment. Judgment is based on the emotional effect the sound has. Consequently, because the sounds have no reference point, the music maker, and then the DJ, can alter the sounds and the rhythms in an infinite number of ways.

on human beings in establishing and reinforcing individuality and community (Chernoff 1979; Schechner and Appel 1990). A musical form and setting which reaffirms and strengthens social bonds by aesthetic means, is easily transferable across cultural boundaries for this reason. Modern communications technology, since the advent of radio and the phonograph, have provided the means for musical idioms to be transported around the globe, sensitizing different cultures to the music of others, which has in turn facilitated the spread of Techno and House music. In addition, Techno and House music is an instrumental music made with computers. There are virtually no words, no language barriers, meaning is provided by the listener and the dancers, and the computer is a musical instrument not associated with any particular cultural heritage, or any age, sex, gender, or race.

At the end of the twentieth century, Western classical music and Jazz are virtually international musics, in that they are understood and appreciated, truly understood and appreciated, by people all over the world. Rock music also has spread widely. But just as these musics have spread and are understood and appreciated, so the relationship between artist and listener, and the relationship between listener and listener which is enshrined in these musics, has also spread. So it is with Techno and House music. Yet neither Western Classical music, Jazz nor Rock, are musics that are produced through the interaction of the artists and those attending the performance. None of these musics imbue a sense of responsibility or feeling of having the power to influence events in the listener, and consequently, none of these musics are social in the way that a music which urges participation and requires the giving of oneself is. Consequently this relationship between the participants has spread with the music, only unlike Western classical music, Jazz or Rock, it is actually the event and the promise of community which has spread as much as, if not more than the music. The music can be appreciated on its own as a recording, but listening to it always evokes both the desire to participate again and the feeling of individual and communal affirmation.

Techno and House music are musics of their time, and as an integral part of a social event, they come to represent the values of the people who attend these social events. The sense of community engendered by the music and the setting then reinforces these values. Of crucial importance also, is the development of the idea of community itself which these events engender, which has its own values in a given time and place and makes its own demands. But community at a Techno music or House music party is only possible through the voluntary active participation of individuals, so that the successful achievement of community also reaffirms and strengthens individuality. A Techno party, then, is potentially an ideal setting to study individual selves and collective selves, and the relationship between them in a given time and place. In the case of Japan, the underground dance music scene has been slowly developing since about 1991, the time the Bubble burst. During that period, it has spread throughout the country. From Fukuoka to Sapporo there are thriving local underground dance communities, and Japan has a number of internationally respected Techno and House musicians and DJs.

*******

### 6.3) Strategies of Capture

I thought long and hard about the best way to present the data on the party-goers. I knew that it was necessary to create in the mind of the reader, a feeling, a picture, of these people and their lives. Who are these Children of the Bubble now cast into an uncertain future, in a present where the most fundamental values are being challenged and reassessed? For this reason, I decided to write extended pieces of descriptive prose, linked together as a 'concatenation of evocations'. This I have done, with no discussion in between the various evocations. Instead I have preceded them, below, with notes explaining what, where, and who.

Once again, 'narratives of being and becoming' (**Intro**) were collected during semi-structured interviews, using a series of questions which were addressed to all interviewees (see Appendix B). The interview questions were taken from the GA interview (**3.1**), and modified where necessary. I wanted to know if the interviewees thought that the music attracted people with certain attitudes and values. And, if so, what were these attitudes and values, and how did it differ from 'other lifestyles and ways of thinking (*hoka no seikatsu to kangaekata*)'. I wanted to know why they went to parties; what did they get from them? Groups constituted on the basis of voluntary membership have to have something that draws people to them. I wanted to know whether they were open about going to parties, and about the values and attitudes *they* associated with them. Who could they speak to about it. Who could they invite, who could they not invite. Did they talk about it at work, etc. At the same time that I was trying to ascertain what the values and attitudes were, I was also trying to map them in terms of morality and in terms of social space in relation to developments throughout Japan as a whole.

In the same way as with the employees at GA, I asked the party-goers to describe the parties, and the relationship among the party goers while at the parties and outside them, in terms of familiar concepts, such as *shuudan, nakama, seken, sekentei, senpai/kōhai,* attempting to build up a picture of whether, and how, selves, both individual and collective at the parties, differed from these concepts. The interviews were then rounded off with more general questions concerning the relationship between men and women at parties, again looking for departures from norms, as well as conformity. Finally, I asked about hopes for the future of Japan. I did not ask for projections, except in one case: Did the interviewees think that the values associated with the parties were spreading, and would come to dominate. I asked this, not to make any predictions myself, but to get an idea of how these people regarded their own position within Japanese society at that moment in time.

The interviews were undertaken in different locations, by mutual agreement between myself and the interviewees. The interviews with Masa, Rika, Yuka, Keiichi, and Kazuo were conducted in Masa and Kazuo's apartment in Ikejiri, Tokyo. This was at Masa's suggestion, and I had a policy of accommodating my subjects whenever possible. The timing and place of the

interviews was more under my control than was the case with the GA interviews, but in all cases the interviews were held a location suggested by the interviewees.

Masa and Kazuo's apartment is described in the second evocation. The interview with Takeshi and Masumi was at Intelligent in Ebisu, a shop and meeting place, which is the subject of the third evocation. The interview with Chōji and Masako was also held at Intelligent. I met Hitomi and Ai in the early evening, sitting at the cafe in Yoyogi Park, near the Jingu-Mae Gate. As dusk fell on a early warm summer afternoon, we spent an hour and a half running through the interview questions, taking tangents here and there. I had two other interviews planned, one with Ichikawa-san, the founder of Intelligent, and another with Shunsuke, a section head (*kachō*) with a large air-conditioning and heating equipment company. Neither of these interviews happened in the end. I started the interview with Ichikawa-san, but before we had got past the warm-up, he had closed up entirely after refusing to talk about his parents. I tried to move on, but he didn't answer any other questions. Shunsuke had agreed to be interviewed, but I subsequently decided not to go ahead with the interview. I decided that talking to me would be too painful for him.

The interviews were deliberately communal. I thought carefully about the possible advantages and disadvantages of this, which I discuss in detail in the Introduction to the thesis, and in 3.1. I had selected these people after having been actively looking for interviewees for about three months. I had been going to parties regularly, about once a fortnight for over a year, to venues like The Liquid Room in Shinjuku, Yellow in Nishi Azabu, Token Café in Meguro, Maniac Love in Omote Sando, Feel in Shibuya, Gold in Shibaura, and occasionally Geoid, off TV Asahi Dori, or Delight in Shinjuku-ni-chome. I would often end up in quite protracted conversations with people, but in the end, I didn't interview anybody I met in a club. Many agreed to be interviewed, but the attempts to meet subsequently always broke down for one reason or another, usually problems in synchronizing schedules, but undoubtedly due to lethargy and apprehension as well. As a result, all the interviews, except two, are with friends of friends, none of whom I selected. In the end, I asked Yuka and Masako if they would agree to be interviewed, and if they would ask any of their friends. My only directive was that I wanted to interview both men and women, deciding to wait and see what cross-section of people I got, then drawing conclusions in the light of how the sample was assembled. Masako was five years older than Yuka, and they did not have the same circle of friends, so I judged that would produce a fair cross-section. I took the first thirteen people who were suggested to me, who agreed to be interviewed, and who made an arrangement with me. Twenty one people were suggested, eighteen agreed to be interviewed, eleven were eventually interviewed, five men and six women, aged between eighteen and thirty two.

I was always aware that I was having some kind of effect on the interviewees, as a result of my race, sex, age, appearance etc. (3.1). I always thought very carefully about who I was going to interview, and how to best to approach a question. Unlike the interviews at GA, the software company, I wore baggy jeans, sneakers, and a loose-fitting T-shirt, and consciously sat in an informal way. I was less formal than in the GA interviews, but formal enough, accentuating the academic nature of the interviews at the start, to give some gravitas to the occasion. We used first-names, unlike the interviews at GA, and I have maintained this difference of address between the

GA employees and the party-goers in the thesis. Also, my Japanese is quite good, I was able to pitch my language to create what I judged to be an appropriate distance between us. We also had a lot in common: love of the music, and what I regard as those values equating to the responsibilities facing late 20th century industrial societies (8). In my experience, people who like Techno music invariably embrace new technology favourably, using it comfortably as part of their daily lives. This was something else we had in common. All the interviewees responded well, although Kazuo hardly said a word. But this was clearly not unusual, and although economical with his words, he was very attentive and involved. How do I know the interviewees responded favourably? Because my questions were given due consideration, and because I am familiar enough with Japanese language and behavioral strategies to make that judgment. Also, I collected a lot of valuable data, which had a consistency across the party-goers and the employees at GA.[7]

In the second evocation, detailing the interview with Masa, Kazuo, Rika, Yuka, and Keiichi, I describe how I came to interview them. I met the Intelligent crew, Chōji , Ichikawa-san, Masumi, and Takeshi, by going there after being told about Intelligent by Masako, who often booked Ichikawa-san, an Ambient DJ, to DJ at the parties she organised with her boyfriend. Ai and Hitomi were introduced to me through Yuka, who also introduced me to Masa. I had been introduced to Shunsuke at a party, over a year before I asked him to allow me to interview him.

Following the evocations, I review the lifecourses of the interviewees, identifying trends, patterns, and anomalies, before drawing conclusions. Much of this information came out the informal conversation that preceded and succeeded interviews. This was a strategy of mine to orientate both myself and the other interviewees, in relation to me and to each other, and to the subject, drawing everybody together onto the same wavelength, and then being part of the moving apart, back into the rest of the day. Valuable data was collected during these orchestrated pre- and post- stages of the interview.[8]

The evocations, below, begin with an evocation of the final stages of a journey to a party. This is an evocation of myself, as I try to give the reader some sense of the occasion. The second evocation is the interview in Masa and Kazuo's apartment in Ikejiri in Tokyo. Next, I describe my first visit to Intelligent in Ebisu, when I first met Chōji and Ichikawa-san. Then, I describe Masako, the Queen of Tokyo Techno, and finally, Shunsuke, revealing why I chose not to interview him after all. The order of the evocations is the order in which I wrote them, and does not indicate the order in which the events occurred. There is no significance in the order of the evocations, at least none was meant.

*******

Vesna, my wife, and I were going to the Liquid Room, one of the most famous venues for Techno in the world, located on the eleventh floor of an office building on the southern fringes of Kabukicho, the famous entertainment district of Shinjuku in Tokyo. All the great names in Techno play here, almost one every week, all of them relishing the prospect of playing to what is regarded as one of

[7]See footnote 3 Chapter Three.

[8]This pre- and post-interview conversation was not possible at GA, due to time constraints

the best crowds in the world, on a state-of-the-art sound system. The venue is famous because the DJs love to play here. That night, though, there were no famous names. It was the third anniversary party of Club Venus, the party that had put the Liquid Room on the global underground dance music map, and all the DJs were local DJs who had been involved with Club Venus in one way or another. There were no big Japanese names playing either.

Passing through Kabukichō, its usual melange of glitz and sleaze, we saw the queue for the Liquid Room winding back at least a hundred metres from the entrance. Masako, who together with other Tokyo DJs, such as Wada and Yo C! (Yoshi), was playing that night, had put us on the guest list, which thankfully allowed us to go straight in. As the elevator approached the eleventh floor, we could hear the thumping beat of the music. I shivered and enjoyed the moment of excitement which accompanies entering a party where expectations will be high. As the doors opened, the atmosphere hit both of us. The energy was palpable as we stepped out of the elevator, and while going through the practicalities of the cloakroom we remained patient, now so close to the dancefloor: the crucible. I looked around, people were standing and talking, walking around, sitting around, chatting, getting their breath back, bringing the energy from the dancefloor out into the lounge area and into each others' lives, its high energy fuelling connectivity through conversations, smiles, concerns. The mood was relaxed but buoyant. Formalities accomplished, we stepped in to the arena. The music hit us like a wave, but the sound was so pure, it didn't register as loud at all, just pure effect. The Liquid Room is a two-tiered auditorium, with about five gentle steps separating the upper tier from the dancefloor. After having recovered from the initial disorientation caused by the full force of the music, the strange projections, the lasers, and the minimal lighting, we could see it. The dancefloor was heaving like a choppy sea, heads bobbing up and down, arms waving like corn. Over one thousand Japanese locked into the music and each other.

In the middle of the dance floor, Vesna and I looked at each other and laughed. The atmosphere was exhilarating. A few people around us noticed our reaction and smiled broadly, first at us, then at each other. Suddenly we were all smiling, grins getting bigger and bigger. The feeling of community undeniable.

*******

The address was Ikejiri in Setagaya-ku, Tokyo. Yuka had set up the interview. I had met her a few times at parties but we never really got talking. She was twenty eight, pleasant and easy-going, and had trained as a hat designer and maker at art college in Tokyo in the late-Eighties. She had escaped to England, as she put it, in 1989, and had lived in Brighton, making hats for friends and selling them to a boutique in the town to supplement the savings she had brought with her from Japan. Living in Brighton in 1989 and making hats meant that it was more than likely that she would come into contact with the exploding House and Techno scene, which she did. Yuka had given me Masa's number and told me to call him. He was expecting my call and we would arrange the interview. I had never met Masa before although he designed the flyers (*chirashi*) for one of the best parties in Tokyo, which I often went to. I had heard a lot about Masa and his colleagues, Kazuo and Keiichi.

They had a graphic design company called Dynamix, which was getting a reputation for their excellent work, and in 1996 were asked by Issey Miyake to collaborate with him in designing his 1997 Paris fashion show production. They also did prospecti for art colleges and computer schools, and promotional material and conference design for mainstream business. When I called, I introduced myself and we quickly and efficiently set a date and time.

I had never been to Setagaya-ku before. I'd travelled through it on the Odakyu Line, watching from the windows of the Romance Car as I was carried to Hakone, either for a visit to the open air sculpture park or to a hot spa. As I climbed out of the subway, everything looked familiarly chaotic. I began to walk along the road towards the apartment, an expressway sitting over the top of it. It was late May and Tokyo was experiencing a characteristically hot sunny spell before the *tsuyu*, the rainy season, began in early June for a month or so. It was hot and noisy, and the pollution from the road next to me and the expressway above me was making me nauseous. Eventually, I arrived at the apartment block, entered the building and took the elevator up to the twelfth floor. The building, which looked as though it had been built in the 1970s, was a little dilapidated and I expected a typical, dark 2LDK, ten mat room.[9]

As the door opened, Masa warmly welcomed me into a large 90m$^2$ apartment with a panoramic view of Tokyo looking towards Shinjuku. His hair virtually covered his narrow shoulders, and dressed in royal blue satin flares and a turquoise T- shirt, he took me by surprise. The apartment was open plan with a large L-shaped area leading to two large living rooms, a kitchen and bathroom. The walls were covered with beautiful fabrics, batiks from Indonesia, a popular destination for young Japanese, and what looked like Thai silks. In between, there were some very impressive computer graphics and beautiful computer generated images on the walls. The floors were covered with rugs, reminiscent of kilims and bokaras, and there were loads of cushions and *zabuton*, traditional Japanese floor cushions. The doors of both the living rooms were open and inside both I could see huge Macintosh monitors for graphics, an enormous Canon colour printer which must have been able to print A2 at least, and more fabrics cushions and computer art. I felt as though I was among people who were content and in control of their lives: confident, relaxed, and obviously talented and industrious.

It was three o'clock, and Masa was the only person there. Had everybody understood that I had this carefully planned? Was I about to witness a degree of *laisse faire* that extended to people not turning up for meetings and not bothering or even feeling the need to let anybody know? Masa asked me if I'd like something to drink and told me that Kazuo had just gone to buy some milk, Keiichi had suddenly had to go and visit a client but would be back at about four, and Rika and Yuka should be here by now. When he'd made the tea, he showed me around the apartment. In the foot of the L, which I hadn't been able to see from where I had sat down at a low table in the other part of the room, there was a balcony with plants and shrubs, and another huge MaCintosh monitor and PowerMac, with a mind-altering yellow and purple graphic swirling lazily on the seventeen inch screen. "Is that something you're working on?", I asked. "No that's just a screen saver" Masa

[9]2LDK means two rooms for living and dining plus kitchen. The apartment usually has an area the equivalent of ten *tatami* straw mats, or about fifteen square metres - in other words small.

replied. I momentarily imagined it must be quite pleasant to start the working day with that on your screen. We talked about the view and about living in the metropolis:

> I like living in the city and I'm very much in favour of technology, using it to make our lives easier and cleaner, using it to conserve and protect the planet. I'm not into living on the top of a mountain and cutting myself off from everybody and everything. I know that I could have all my information technology with me on the top of a mountain, but I want to be with people and know what's going on. Cutting yourself off from the world doesn't benefit anybody .

Masa and Kazuo met at university in 1987. They were both studying art and graphic design. As students they lived together, and continued to do so after they had graduated and were working for different companies. In 1994, after having worked for a few years, Masa left his job and began working as a free-lance designer. "We lived together and went out at weekends quite a lot. To clubs, to Techno clubs. We made a lot of friends in clubs" (Masa). Masa met Keiichi at a party and invited him to their place where they discussed the idea of starting Dynamix. "Keiichi and I met in a club, so we have a rather close friendship (*kurabu de shiri atta tomodachi dakara kekkō chuushin no tsunagari ga tsuyoi kanji desu ne*)", Masa told me.

Keiichi had studied economics at Keio University, but had no real desire to join one of Japan's large companies, which, as an economics graduate from one of Japan's top universities, was virtually expected of him. "I didn't want to join the company world. I didn't know what I wanted, but I didn't want that. I also wanted to travel, so that is what I did when I graduated". Keiichi had been to India and Nepal, Thailand, spending six months in all away from Japan. He had saved enough working part-time as a student to last that long. "I might have stayed longer, gone to Vietnam or China probably, but I ran out of money". When he arrived back, he had prepared himself for his reception: "I knew that when I got back I would have to find a job and it would be difficult because I had gone away, but having gone to India and Nepal and Thailand was the problem. Going to the U.S. is OK, maybe, but India? I couldn't even get a job in 7 Eleven because they thought I was weird. A Keio graduate whose just returned from living in India, that was too much!".

Before Masa and I could continue, Kazuo arrived back, accompanied by Rika whom he had met entering the apartment block. What struck me about Kazuo first, was how shy and reticent he was. When compared to Masa, who was very dynamic and ebullient, it was difficult to imagine them as friends who had known each other for a long time and who were in business together. Rika reminded me of one of those elegant models from the Swinging Sixties 'smart set'. Dressed in a loose fitting light blue cotton kaftan and slacks, she had her copious hair piled up in a Grecian style, wearing some very understated earrings and jewellry. She was confident and engaging and shook my hand holding eye contact all the time Masa was introducing us. For a moment I was taken aback by her presence and sense of self. She was a jewellry designer who, I discovered later during the interview, always wore her own jewellry.

Kazuo, Rika , and I sat down around the low table on *zabuton* while Masa asked Rika what she wanted to drink. She asked for water, and as he went to get it she began to apologise for being late. Masa brought her water and some green tea for Kazuo and me. Rika told us that Yuka had

called her a few minutes ago on her mobile phone and would be a little late. I hoped she would arrive soon, as I wanted to record everything that was said, but didn't want to start the interview before she arrived. As it was, while the others were arriving and we were waiting for Yuka, I was busily trying to recall everything that Masa had said about liking the metropolis and his positive attitude to technology. Without Keiichi being there as well, I decided to wait. Masa had put on some ambient music[10] and he and Rika began asking me what my research was about. Kazuo sat saying nothing, but was obviously listening and interested. I soon realised he was simply quiet and everybody was used to it. I decided to turn the tape recorder on immediately to capture the whole conversation. No sooner had we started when Yuka arrived. She was wearing one of her hats, a burgundy crushed velvet top hat, reminding me of the Mad Hatter in *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*. Her glasses, which invariably sat towards the end of her nose, made her look slightly eccentric, but her black combat trousers and Dr. Martens gave her an overall image of being purposeful and practical.

*******

'Intelligent' has been in Ebisu since 1993. It was founded as 'Limit' as a branch of an underground dance music 'lifestyle' trading company in Seattle, but went independent in 1995. Ebisu is an expensive part of Tokyo, nice apartments and houses, no industry, and close to the centre. Walking from the Yamanote Line station towards Naka-Meguro, Intelligent is on the second floor in a quaint little alley just behind the main road. Only the name on the mailbox inside the door gives any indication that you have come to the right place, although even then, it doesn't say which floor. Walking up the stairs for the first time, I continued past the first floor and up the next flight of stairs. Only then did I begin to hear the call of the drums, from a distance that unmistakable dull thud. As I walked in, I was surprised to hear how loud the music was, but immediately registered that this was not the stuff you tend to hear in high street boutiques and fashion shops - this was real, quality, underground Techno music. It was a shop, selling clothing and bags, crazy fashion accessories. Fractal T-shirts, holographic slacks and bikini tops, etc. Dayglo sunglasses, fluorecene bracelets and necklaces, the kinds of things you'd see some people wearing at a typical party. It also sold records and a few CDs. There were no fancy shelves or clothes rails, but it was tidy and had sofas and armchairs in one of the corners. Near the door, one of the walls was covered with messages and photographs of people, in cities, in clubs, on mountains, in forests, in the shop itself. I soon came to realise that the shop was like a retreat, a haven, a family home, which people would return to from all over Japan, and if they couldn't come in person, they would send postcards and photographs, sending their wishes and their love, their stories and their plans. Here on the wall was an indelible community that spread the length and breadth of Japan, and out into the wider world. The role of

[10]Ambient is a computer-generated electronic music which is used to provide a relaxing ambiance for a social gathering. The term was originally used by Brian Eno in the 1970s, who produced a series of soundscapes, such as 'Music For Airports', which were not to be listened to particularly, but were to create a mood within a given space inhabited or used by people. With the arrival of Techno music and Techno and House parties, ambient music was the name given to the music which was used to 'chill-out' to, after dancing all night to Techno or House music. As the underground dance scene developed, the best parties would provide a comfortable, relaxing lounge with low lighting, often with comfortable chairs and cushions for people to have an alternative to the dancefloor, for when people needed to rest or just wanted to relax and talk.

the DJ in all of this and their own feelings of respect and affection born of their intimate relationship with the dancers, was brought home to me yet again by the messages and cards from the famous and the not so famous. I felt almost reverential as I realised how important the music and the community was to these young Japanese. This did not look like escapism, nor fashion or fad, and I was to discover just how true that is.

The music was coming from a guy at the end of the shop, playing two decks and a mixer. I went up to watch him work, but he was only playing records, 'beat mixing' as it is called, just making sure all the records flow into one another. He looked up and smiled, then held out his hand. This was Chōji, whom I would come to know over the coming months. We shook hands and then he carried on. I watched for a little longer, but he was only listening to the records, considering their possibilities, so I wandered around the shop, looking at the clothes and bags and accessories. There was an enormous television showing a video of Berlin's Love Parade with the sound turned down. It looked like it was a copy, for the thousands of euphoric dancers, rhythmically swarming around the multicoloured floats driving around the streets of Berlin, were blurred and fuzzy. The fuzziness with no sound fitted my thoughts perfectly, as I thought about the wall with the cards and the photos again momentarily.

When I found myself back by the door, somebody else had appeared from the back of the shop and appeared to be doing some book-keeping on the counter. He looked up and caught my eye, and I took this as the opportunity to introduce myself. This is always an awkward moment: the moment when you reveal your intentions as an anthropologist. I explained to him what I was studying and why I had come to Intelligent. This was Ichikawa-san, the boss. I had seen him DJing at Odyssey in the chill-out. He had a shaved head with a small pony tail at the back, and looked like a Zen monk. I was to discover later that Ichikawa's conviction was grounded in Japan's past as much as in his active role in building a global community for the 21st century. He was also the first and only interviewee who refused to answer some of my questions. Masumi and Takeshi also worked at Intelligent, and I would meet them on subsequent occasions.

*******

Masako was the Queen of Tokyo Techno. She, like Yuka, had gone to England in the late Eighties, and had worked in London as a secretary for a Japanese company. Like many Japanese who go abroad, her background was very ordinary. Her father worked for Tokyo Gas as a fitter, and her mother was a housewife. In London, Masako would go out partying regularly, but after nearly three years, in 1991, she had decided that she was getting bored and would return to Japan. Thinking that there were no parties in Japan, she began to buy records. Going to the specialist shops she slowly built up a collection. When she returned to Japan, she bought herself two Technics decks and in the seclusion of her small apartment began to learn to play the records and mix. She had no intention of becoming a DJ and playing in public, she simply wanted to hear the music, and at the time that was the only way. In late 1991, a party began under the railway tracks in Yurakuchō, one the first parties in Japan. She went regularly and got to know the organiser. After about six months, one of the DJs left to start his own party and Masako was offered the chance to stand in. She never looked back,

and although she continued to work as the manager of a fashion store in Shibuya, she and her boyfriend started what was generally considered to be the best party in Tokyo by 1994, with Masako one of the better DJs. She would be concentration personified behind the decks, mixing with precision and a real sense of urgency. Leading the dancers, watching the crowd carefully, monitoring their reaction to her chosen path, and smiling, urging the music on, communicating with everybody when they responded.

*******

Shunsuke was a dashing tall salaryman, a *kachō*, section chief, who worked for a company that sold and fitted industrial air conditioners and air purifiers. Whenever I saw him, he was either dancing around like a mad thing, having a great time on the dance floor with his beautiful girlfriend Makiko, or chilling-out in the lounge at a party, discussing the complexities of modern life, always a chill-out topic of conversation. His life was certainly very complex. He was married with two children, two little girls, but his wife would not come with him to a party. Yet the parties were what he lived for. Shunsuke had real problems in his life. Not only did he not have very much in common with his colleagues at work, he had slowly drifted away from his wife. Makiko was beautiful and intelligent, very composed, and provided a real centre for Shunsuke's turbulent life. She wanted him to leave his wife and let her help him bring the disparate parts of his life together with her, where there would be no lies, no hidden secrets. But even though Shunsuke had let himself be drawn into a world which was rapidly tearing him apart instead of making him whole, as he at first had hoped, he had told Makiko categorically that he would not leave his wife. Feeling that Makiko was wasting her life chances by being with him, he eventually told her to go. After that, I saw him only occasionally, with a different girl every time. They were always pretty, but you only had to look behind Shunsuke's famous smile to see that his eyes were sad and empty, and he was tired and worried. I had asked if I could interview him, and he agreed wholeheartedly, as ever, but I decided not to in the end, as I didn't want to ask him to talk about something that was so precious to him, but which had made his life such a misery as well. I remembered vividly how, one night at a party, talking with pride about his daughters, he had started crying uncontrollably when he had shown somebody a picture of them.

*******

Masa (27), Kazuo (27), Keiichi (28), Rika (23) , Yuka (28), Masako (32), Chōji (27) , Ichikawa san (31), Shunsuke (32), as well as Masumi (25), Takeshi (18), Hitomi (24), and Ai (25), whom I also interviewed, fall around the second and third of my categories of emerging individualism, which I outlined at the beginning of this section. To recap: (1) Working in a company like GA, where the organisational structure and command structure of the company institutionalizes and legitimates individuality through its working practices and codes of conduct. (2) Working in an 'up-down' company (*jōge gaisha*) and having to hide one's individuality in order to conform. (3) Working in the spaces which are appearing as the flexible economy establishes itself, doing part-time, temporary,

specialist fixed-contract work, or running their own small businesses.

Masa worked for a design company and left to start his own business because he had his own ideas. With the growth of the flexible economy providing opportunities, as the outsourcing of specialist work increased (5.2), he and Kazuo took their chance with Keiichi, whom Masa had met at a party. Masa said that they trained him to do computer design, and then he left when he felt ready to go it alone. He certainly had his life outside work which nobody at work knew much about, but he wasn't under pressure to socialize with colleagues. Nevertheless, he had his circle of close friends who went to Techno parties occasionally

Kazuo also worked for a company which designed promotional material. Like Masa, he didn't have to nurture workplace relationships outside working hours, although he was secretive to his colleagues about his life outside work. He and Masa decided to start their own business because they anticipated the development of computer art and graphic design.

Rika and Yuka are young entrepreneurs, designing and making highly individual products. Yuka had a bad spell for a few months, when she couldn't support herself on her hats, but was able to work part-time for a friend of Ai's, who managed a clothes shop in Harajuku in Tokyo. Both of them live and work without feeling that they are strange or different. As the flexible economy grows, difference becomes the norm, not the exception.

Masako works as a manager in a fashion store in Shibuya, organised what was one of the best parties in Tokyo, and is a DJ. When Masako, Chōji , and I were talking about *seken*, she started to tell me about the important things in her life and she didn't even mention her job:

> "I don't really have anything to do with mainstream society (*atashi amari ippan shakai to kakawaru koto ga sukunai ne*). My *seken*, my world (*sekai*) is organising parties, hanging around at Intelligent, and Techno (laughing)..."

Yet, although she says she doesn't have much to do with mainstream society, the parties she organises and the parties she plays at, are mostly attended by people who can be regarded as being in the mainstream. As Masa said: "Even salarymen come to parties (*sararīman demo tekuno paatii ga suki na hito de*)".

Chōji was working as a young salaryman in a large real estate company which was building and developing commercial property at the height of the Bubble. He became disillusioned and looked for a way out:

> The things I regarded as necessary in my order of priorities in life changed (*jibun no kachikan no naka de hitsuyō to sareru mono, jibun no naka de sono kachi kijun ga kawatta*). It was a time when you put your trust in things you could see (*sou iu me ni mieru mono ga kekkyoku shinrai dekiru mitai na jidai datta*). For example, I was into money and fixed assets (laughs) (*tatoieba okane de ari ne kotei san de ari*). But something changed. Now my priorities, my values have changed. Now the most important things in my life are people (*hito*), trust and reliability (*shinrai*) and love (*ai*) (laughs embarrassedly).

Chōji had been into Rap and Hip Hop, but then heard Techno when he went to Frisco Records, a specialist dance music store in Shibuya. He was completely taken by the music and through the members of staff at Frisco he went to his first party in 1992. "That was the turning point (*sou iu no wo*

*hontō ni wakatte kita jiten ne*)". He bought a pair of Technics decks and left his job six months later. He heard that Ripple, a large record chain, needed somebody who knew about Techno and House music to develop their stock, and he applied for the job and got it. "I had quite a bit of money saved and I was living at home, so my living costs were low. My parents were very worried, but they were understanding. My grandparents had put their savings into NTT shares and had lost money in the NTT share scandal (1.2), and my parents were still angry about that". Chōji lived at home, bought records at Frisco, going in every week to see what had just arrived, and practiced. He met Ichikawa san at a party and now he works at Intelligent and DJs at parties a couple of times a month.

Ichikawa san was working as a producer for NHK[11] on what he described as 'cultural' programmes (*bunkateki to iu*). He described NHK as a rigid (*katai*) organisation, and he left for very similar reasons to those which forced Matsuda-san, the President of GA (3.1) to leave Toshiba. "I got angry that we only made programmes about *netsuke*[12] makers, that kind of thing. I never got a say, it was so boring". Ichikawa san wanted to make programmes which showed how the old ways and ideas were everywhere in the present, not just in the past. He strongly believes in global awareness and responsibility, but he also believes in peoples drawing on the best of their traditions and teaching other peoples about those traditions. He had seen a mail order classified for Limit clothing and accessories in the back of Pia, the popular Tokyo listings magazine, and decided to write to them asking for a franchise in Tokyo. They agreed to pay for the rent on the shop in Ebisu and to supply him with stock, so he quit his job at NHK in 1993. He likes modern 'traditional' Japanese music and contemporary Western music. Philip Glass has done a number of collaborations with Ambient[13] musicians and this is how Ichikawa san came to discover Techno. It is Ambient which continues to capture his imagination. When he opened the shop he had the novel idea of installing a DJ booth, so that passing DJs could play and he could practice after opening hours. In 1994, Ichikawa san bought another Franchise from Limit and opened a store in Osaka, and in 1995, just before I met him, they had opened a store in Fukuoka on the southern-most island of Kyuushu and a stall in Laforet, the fashion mall in Harajuku in Tokyo. In January 1996, Ichikawa san, Chōji and Masumi, borrowed the money to buy out Limit, and Intelligent was started.

Ichikawa san is a quiet person. Masako says he is *majime* (serious), which I agree with. He totally refused to talk to me about his family and their reaction to him leaving NHK. As it was, he had appeared to be less than enthusiastic about me interviewing him in the first place, so when I asked him about his family, he became visibly agitated, and would not engage in anything more than the shortest and vaguest of answers after that.

Masumi is an architect by training, but had left the architect's practice for which she had been working, because she had been working there for four years and she was still only doing redrawing and making final corrections and adjustments to the drawings of the senior architects. She had yet to be given her own project and had known Ichikawa-san from when he was an

---

[11]*Nippon Hōsō Kyōkai*: Japan Broadcasting Corporation

[12]*Netsuke* are hand carved toggles which were used to attach a sake flask or pouch to a person's *kimono*. Old ones are collectors items, as are new ones made by a recognised craftsmen. The value of *netsuke* in the present stems from the fact that they resonate with the meanings of an idyllic past, ideologically reconstructed in the present.

[13]See Footnote 7.

assistant producer working for NHK. She had been in the same kind of situation as Matsuda-san at Toshiba, and Ichikawa san at NHK: unable to use her initiative. When Ichikawa-san left to start Limit, he had suggested she join him to design and produce the magazine he planned to distribute to all those who signed the visitors book in the shop. She had since become responsible for the interior design of the shops, and, like everybody, Ichikawa-san, Chõji , and Takeshi, she did her bit on the check out.

Takeshi left high school in 1993 and did not go on to university or a college of any kind. Admitting that he was not the best student ever, he told me he'd had enough of studying. Maybe he'd study later, he said. He had applied for nearly a hundred jobs and had about twenty interviews by the time he got a job as a sales assistant in a clothes shop. He hated it and had been looking for something else when he saw a classified for an assistant at Intelligent in a recruitment magazine. He had no idea what life had in store for him, and even when working at Intelligent, clearly very happy, he had no concern for the future. He was irrepressible, constantly laughing out loud and fooling around, well-meaning and polite, but after six months working at Intelligent he was obviously still revelling in his new-found freedom.

I hadn't met Hitomi and Ai before the interview. Hitomi had lived in London from 1991 until 1992. She had gone there to study English after finishing university, and had wanted to stay but was refused another visa because her course had finished. When she returned to Japan, she trained as a Shiseido cosmetics consultant and was working in Marui department store in Shinjuku in Tokyo. She had met Yuka at a party, and Yuka introduced her to me. Ai was a friend of Hitomi's. She was a hairdresser who worked in a salon on Takeshita Dõri in Harajuku. Hitomi and Ai had met when Hitomi went into her salon to get her hair cut, and Ai had cut it. They became friends and after about a month Hitomi took Ai to a party.

Shunsuke is an example of somebody who has shunned a company-centred society, but still works for an 'up-down' company. Before he found a place where he could be open and could relax among like-minded people, he managed to suppress his individuality and conform, "for about eight years, so far",[14] but once he started going to parties, he found it increasingly difficult to maintain a facade. I last saw him in May 1996 and he looked like a man stretched to breaking point, and I was told by someone who knew him well that he had already had a warning at work. Chõji had been in a similar position. He had worked in a large 'up-down' company and as soon as he found people like himself, he decided to quit when an opportunity arose. Ichikawa-san's experience was much the same, and Masumi's experience in the architect's practice was also not dissimilar. Unfortunately for Shunsuke, he was married and had a family, although maybe the reason why Ichikawa-san wouldn't talk to me was because he too has a wife and children whom he had left. His relationship with his family obviously causes him pain. With Shunsuke, though, in a perverse way it was his strong sense of duty and obligation which was making his life miserable. Others would have given up their job, left their partner, and settled down with Makiko.

*******

[14]This was August 1995

The life stories of all the interviewees are very similar, yet at the same time display differences which indicate the kinds of life choices that young Japanese have been faced with in the post-Bubble environment. Shunsuke, is the only example of somebody still working for a company which is unable to accommodate his new individualism, which itself suggests that more and more young Japanese are leaving their companies rather than staying. This indicates that, although new working practices are only being implemented slowly, other opportunities are growing. This is to be expected with the growth of the flexible economy, which is demonstrably bringing in new working practices and work ethics faster than planned restructuring. Whether by the route of joining an established company and leaving, or by finding work in the flexible economy directly, all the interviewees now work under similar conditions, characterised by a marked separating off of the sphere of work from the rest of their lives. In this respect, their lives are organised in exactly the same way as the employees at GA, indicating that a pattern may be emerging.

All the interviewees either found themselves unable, or were unwilling, to fit in and form mutually fulfilling, lasting relationships with their work colleagues, or decided that they would be unable to do so if they joined an established company. This left them all without a community with which to identify, and which would legitimate their selves. Legitimacy derives from the recognition of Ego by others. Using Mauss' (1985) three categories of person, without filling a recognised '*role*', a recognised set of social expectations, these young people had no acceptable '*personne*', a self recognised by society, which therefore left them as an incomplete self, '*moi*', which they felt acutely. This is purely a schematic explanation, but it helps us understand the importance of a set of social expectations in constructing the self and the need for those social expectations to be recognised.

I was unable to interview anyone who had either wanted to work for an established 'up-down (*jōge gaisha*)', but couldn't due to the effects of the recession, or who had worked for one and been made redundant. Interviewees with these experiences would have made my sample for complete, I feel.

*******

## 7.3) The Feeling of Community: The Meaning of Community

In the following chapter, I will look in more detail at the relationship between individual selves, and at the relationship between individual selves and collective selves that constitute the relationships within a party, together with how those relationships define parameters for thought and action and define individual selves and the various collective selves in the lives of these young people outside the party. In the rest of this chapter, I want to look at what individuality and community means to these people, by considering what being at a party feels like. That is to say, how do they describe the feeling of individuality and community. Bearing in mind that Miyanaga (1991) regards a 'private' group as a group entered voluntarily on the basis of personal commitment, community of this sort has to feel good, otherwise there will be no community. From the feeling of community, I will move to the meaning of community. First, what feels good, and then why it feels good, in order to establish what it is that these people have found to orientate and legitimate their emerging individuality. What is contained in the comments about what a party feels like are the structure of relationships between individual selves and between individual selves and collective selves in the lives of these people, in emotional terms. Vague, certainly, but these emotional narratives are the structure of relationships and selves *as experienced by these selves*. Only once we have established what feels good and bad, can we begin to establish what is regarded as right and wrong, and then can we begin to look more closely at the structure of relationships and selves in a community voluntarily entered.

*******

I now want to present the transcriptions of what the interviewees had to say about why they go to parties, and what it is they get from the parties. Kazuo is not represented here, as he didn't say very much at all. I have quoted the little he did say, where relevant. The order of the transcriptions is random, and does not represent the order in which the interviews were undertaken or transcribed.

- **Masa:** I think the parties are very much a part of a lifestyle (*seikatsu to michikaku shiteiru*), which includes work (*shigoto mo fukumete*). Although work is only a part of this lifestyle, there is always that feeling which comes from the music and the parties when we are working (*shigoto wa seikatsu no ichibu ni natchatteiru itsumo kou iu kanji to iu ka motto ongaku wo kakatteiru toki wa kou iu kanji de yattari toka*). It is inspiring, but it's not all about meditation and contemplation, the music's stimulating and is one of the things about living in Tokyo that I really treasure (*mou insupireishon to iu ka meisō shiteiru dake ja nakute shigeki ni ataetekureru ongaku de mou toriaezu ima no Tōkyō no seikatsu ni wa kakasenai mono no hitotsu desu*). It helps me to actively persevere with my life (*akutibu ni motto ganbarou kana to omottari toka*), and when I go to a party, I can confirm

this myself even more (*paati ni iku to sara ni jibun de sore ga kakunin dekiru*). It's as if I actually feel the energy from others on my skin sometimes (*hito no enerugi wo hada de kanjite, ga! te iku toki mo aru shi*), and if I'm feeling down, people will help each other(*kanashii toki wa minna de tasuke attari toka*). With the Techno scene, all embellishments are stripped away. A person is not admired because they wear nice clothes, their self (*kosei*) is visible and this is what is acknowledged, and that is how they come to be admired. A person's individuality is visible directly. There is no camouflage or mask to deceive others or yourself. We feel this while we are enjoying ourselves. (*tekuno shiin to iu no wa sore ga amari kazarareteinai. Hito no kosei ga sutoreito ni detekuru. Comakashiteinai to iu ka, kirei na yõfuku wo kiru kara ninki ga deru n ja nakute, jibun wo sutoreito ni dashite iku kara sore ga mitomerarete ninki ga deru to iu ka. Sou iu no wo kanji te bokura mo asondeiru).* It's not as if it is something new, what you feel is that you are connected to everybody else and you can actually go out and do something big, therefore that is the way of thinking - the Techno scene is like that (*atarashii koto te iu yori wa jibun ga ima dekiru koto de minna to tsunagatte õkii na koto wo yatte iku to iu kanji dakara kangae kata to iu ka tekuno shiin ni kakawaru shisei no mondai kana*).

- **Rika :** "If the Techno is good, a lot of energy comes from it, but at a good party it's not just about yourself. A lot of people are enjoying it and everybody is helping each other, giving energy (*ii tekuno wo kiitari suru to sugoku sore de enerugi moraeru shi. Ii paati ni iku to jibun dake ja nakute minna mo tanoshindetari toka jibun ga maemuki ni nareru tasukerareru koto ga takusan aru*). We can help each other alot like this (*kinochiteki ni tasukerareru koto ga sugoku aru*), and that one by one, everybody individually is making it happen (*hitori hitori ga hontõ tsukutteiru tte iu kanji*). I can honestly say I am able to totally be myself at parties, and not be worried or anxious about that (*hontõ ni jibun wo subete dashitemo fuan ga nai*). I receive loads of energy and power from all the people at the party. As a result everybody is really positive. There are many people at parties who feel this, so a real feeling of mutual giving and taking is possible (*soko ni iru hito kara sugoi enerugi, pawaa wo moraeru shi dakara sugoku hontõ ni minna maemuki kitte iu ka sore ga otagai hontõ ni gibu and teiku dekiru*). I love the music, but what is more important is people being together (*sore yori mo soko ni ite issho ni sugosu hou ga taisetsu na to omou*).

- **Ai:** Everybody is very cooperative and wants to participate together (*kekkõ kyõryokuteki issho ni sanka shitai*). It's feeling part of a larger whole. People who go to Techno parties are much more into doing things together (*tekuno no hitotachi no hõ ga, motto issho ni yatteiru to omou*). Everybody is very sensitive (*minna kekkõ kankakuteki*) to everybody else. It's very comfortable, it feels like home (*igokochi ga ii*).

- **Keiichi:** It's all about going with friends, meeting them there, having a good time. Also, meeting new people there and having a good time with them. All you have to do is go, and it's as if your friends just grow and grow. That is very pleasant. If there is somebody you want to introduce to your friends, you take them along, that kind of thing. If I know of a good party, and I also know somebody who hasn't been but wants to go, I'll invite them. Whether I'd invite people who have

a different way of thinking (*kangaekata no chigau hito*) I'm not so sure. Some people are open and some closed (*kurouzu dankai to oupen no dankai to ironna reberu ga aru kedo*). So, I can speak to anybody who I feel I can share things with. People who I'm not sure if I can share things with, I might be able to talk to them, invite them along, and then maybe share things with them, although they might turn out to be a burden and it might take time.

- **Masumi:** I think that people who like this kind of music and participate at parties (*paati ni itte sanka shite*) are open-minded (*oupen maindu*). Basically, that is it. I don't think you can say that the lifestyle (*seikatsu*) is different from any other. It's more a case of a 'way of living (*ikikata*)', our attitude to life (*ikite iku shisei*), our values are different (*kachikan ga chigau*). People want to become free (*jiyuu ni naritai, minna*).

- **Masako:** Looking at the people who like the music, there are a significantly high number of interesting people. The music has no words and people have to interpret it for themselves individually. This is important. They're open minded, futuristic, spiritual (*oupen na'indu datari miraiteki na koto, supirichuaru na koto toka*). The way people meet and integrate is far more fluid ( *sesshi kata to iu no wa motto hadō wo kanjiru ne*). They're flexible (*nō ga yawarakai hito da to iu*).

- **Chōji :** The music hits you directly, which does not make you happy necessarily, but what happens is that you become aware that you have your own way of enjoying the music (*chokusetsu nan ni ka ataerarete yorokobu n ja nakute, jibun nari no tanoshikata'tte iu no wo jibun de kizuite*). The music takes you on a journey (*tabi ni sasetekuru to iu*). Then you realise that there are a lot of people enjoying it in their own way. It's quite spiritual (*supirichuaru teki na bubun ga aru n*), but a little different from self-reliance (*jiritsu to wa chotto chigau kedo*).

- **Takeshi:** First time, as often seems to be the case, I didn't dance. But the time before that there was a huge queue, which I was fascinated by. I didn't expect it. We didn't get in, but I had such a great time in the queue!

- **Yuka:** The first time I went to a party, there were two dance floors facing each other, with everybody dancing. It was as if I could see everybody communicating through dancing ( *sono toki dansu no kaiwa ga mieru you na ki ga shita no* ), yet everybody was hearing their own music. That really made an impression on me (*sore wo hajimete mite, sugoku kandō shita*).

For Masa, the parties are 'inspiring (*insupireishon*)', and 'stimulating (*shigeki wo ataete kureru*)'. He 'feels the energy from others (*hito no enerugi wo....kanjite*)', so much so, that sometimes he says he can actually 'feel it on his skin (*hada de*)'. He continues by saying that 'there are no distracting embellishments (*amari kazarareteinai*)', 'a person is not admired because they wear nice clothes', 'there is no camouflage or masking' of the self, so that 'a person's individuality is visible'. All these things feel good to Masa, and he finishes by saying that he 'feels as though he is connected to

everybody else (*jibun ga....minna to tsunagatte*)'. These things feel good to Masa for a number of reasons, which he mentions. They feel good because they inspire him and stimulate him. But it is not simply that the feeling of being inspired is good, or that the feeling of being stimulated is good. Being inspired or stimulated are states of mind which have a tangible effect on thought and action, and consequently have tangible results. As he says: "there is always that feeling which comes from the parties when I am working", and "you feel that you can actually go out and do something important". The parties: "help me to actively persevere with my life".

Two things which Masa mentions tells us directly about selves and the relationship between selves at these parties. He says: "a person is not admired because they wear nice clothes. Their individuality (*kosei*) is visible and this is what is acknowledged. It is on this basis that they are admired". According to Masa, it is a person's individuality which is the focus of attention, and is what is judged most important. However, being together and being there for others is also of key importance. Masa tells us that he feels the energy from others and that if he is feeling down, people will come and help, and that it is through the feeling of being connected to everybody else that individual selves are empowered. Other individual selves acting individually, together, give the self the feeling that it can 'do something important'. Clearly Masa derives something very substantial from the parties, which is very important to him: "they are one of the things about my life in Tokyo at the moment which I really treasure".

There are three things which Rika mentions which make her feel good. These are: being together with other people: "What is most important is people being together". The second feeling she mentions is the giving and receiving of energy from others, which make her feel "very relaxed and very happy" and able "to give energy". The third is: "I can honestly say I am able to totally be myself at parties, and not be worried or anxious about that".[15] The feeling of being together with others and at the same time being able to 'be herself' makes her feel secure, which makes her feel good. So does the giving and receiving of energy and 'power (*pawaa*)'. The relationship between individual selves and the collective selves is summed up by Rika when she says: "one by one, everybody individually is making it happen". "As a result, everybody is really positive. The parties are full of people who feel the same, so a real feeling of mutual giving and taking is possible". Being able to be yourself, mutual giving and taking, and: "that these feelings are really helpful", are why being together and being yourself feel good. Selves, both individual and collective, are empowered through the relationship between individual and community. Individual selves, acting individually, give energy to each other, facilitated by the music. As Rika says: "If the music is good, a lot of energy comes from the music". This accords with Chernoff's (1979) account (6.2).

Both Chōji and Masako are DJs and it is worth listening to what they say about how the music works in a party.

> The music has no words and people have to interpret it for themselves individually. Related to this (*kekkateki ni*), people who like Techno and House music seem to take an interest in more things, relatively speaking. They're more open-minded (*wari to ma kekkateki ni tekuno toka hausu ga suki hito omoshiroi hito ga ōi n ironna koto ni kyōmi wo*

[15]"Being myself' is described by Rikka and others, as being able to 'fully express their self (*jibun wo subete dasu*)'.

*mottari, open mind datari*) (Masako).

> The music hits you directly, which does not make you happy necessarily. It takes you on a journey (*tabi ni sasetekureru*), but what happens is that you become aware that you have your own way of enjoying the music (*choku setsu nan ni ka ataerarete yorokobun ja nakute jibun nari no tanoshikata'tte iu no wo jibun de kizuite*). Then you realise that there are a lot of people enjoying it in their own way. Everybody is kind of self-reliant and independent, but it's a little different (Chōji ).

What makes Masako feel good is that there are a 'significantly high number of interesting people', who are 'open-minded, futuristic, spiritual', who 'meet and integrate in a far more fluid way, and who are 'flexible'. What Masako tells us about selves and the relationship between selves, is that there are a high proportion of individualistic people, that is individuals who express their selves (*jibun wo dasu*), by means of expressing their individuality (*kosei wo dasu*). This is expressed by Masako saying they are 'open-minded', 'flexible', and that 'they integrate in a far more fluid way'. Their *sesshi kata* (ways of integrating) are not rigid.

Both Keiichi and Masa make this point about integrating in a more fluid way. As Keiichi says: "All you have to do is go, and it's as if your friends just grow and grow. That is very pleasant". For Keiichi, this is obviously one of the things which makes him feel good about going to parties. He also mentions open-mindedness: "Some people are open and some closed. So, I can speak to anybody who I feel I can share things with". Keiichi is also prepared to be patient with people who he thinks might like to go to a party: "People who I'm not sure I can share things with, I might be able to talk to them, invite them along and then maybe share things with them. They might be a burden and it might take time". For Keiichi, it is not simply a case that people at parties are open minded, they should also be open-minded towards people who might not be so 'flexible (*nō ga yowarakai hito*)'. This suggests helping others is also recognised positively. What Keiichi tells us about selves and the relationship between selves at parties, is that individual selves tend to be open-minded and do not form exclusive groups. Instead they form fluid collective selves which are open to anybody. This is in marked contrast to the strictly defined boundaries and interaction rituals which Miyanaga (1990) associates with 'the group model of Japanese society'. Hitomi also remarked that a characteristic of parties and the *sesshi kata* of the people who to parties, is that you can make friends with complete strangers: "People you know absolutely nothing about, who you haven't been introduced to, become friends. This is a recent phenomenon". This reminds me of something Masa said when we were talking on his balcony before the others arrived. He said: "Keiichi and I met in a club, so we have a rather close friendship". Clearly, Masa finds it perfectly normal that he should meet people at a party who are likely to become good friends. This certainly indicates that like-minded people go to Techno parties, but more importantly, that the manner in which people meet and form relationships (*sesshi kata*) is indeed changing and becoming more fluid. A phenomenon which demonstrably accompanies the legitimation and establishing of the expression of individuality as a primary ethic of action and interaction. As 'company-centrism' begins to weaken, a new 'individual-centred' type of community seems to be developing, indicating a redefinition and resurgence of community.

Masumi also regards being 'open-minded (*oupen maindidu*)' as a characteristic of the people

who go to Techno parties. Also participation (*paati no itte sanka shite*), participating in forging a community based on open-mindedness, which sanctions open-mindedness, so that people can develop their individuality. She expresses this when she says, everybody who goes to the parties wants to 'grow freely (*jiyuu ni naritai, minna*)'. What makes her feel good is that the parties provide a space for people to develop their individuality, through the participation of individuals, collectively. This makes people feel good. As Masumi remarked on her impressions on her first party: "I remember thinking, it's good to see people enjoying themselves like this, free like this". Feeling good is dependent on people being open-minded and coming together as open-minded individuals, respecting each other on this basis and enjoying this fundamental commonality and the difference it engenders on an individual basis. Masa also made this point when talking about the primacy of recognising and focusing on a person's character, expressed through their individuality: "we feel this while we are enjoying ourselves".

Ai comments that: "everybody is very sensitive to everybody else". This makes her feel good. She says: "everybody is very cooperative and wants to participate together". The fact that people are "much more into doing things together", also makes Ai feel good, as does 'feeling part of a larger whole', which she says is: "comfortable (*igokochi ga ii*)". Participating and cooperating and 'helping each other', characterise all the narratives.

What also stands out is that the interviewees all think there is a greater awareness and mobilisation of cooperation among these individualists than there is in other walks of life. Characterising the people who go to parties as 'people who like Techno/House music', I asked everybody what were the differences in lifestyle compared to other types of people.[16] Cooperation (*kyōryoku*) was mentioned by everybody. I was surprised when told by these individualists that they feel they cooperate and support each other more than other types of people. Yet this is how they see it. Part of this feeling comes from the well-being of cooperating in establishing a community for the legitimation and nurturing of individuality (*kosei*), but it primarily comes from the ethic which urges participation, and an awareness that a new kind of community is emerging. At the parties, I could feel the excitement that was due, not only to people being aware that they can 'be themselves', that is, express their individuality (*jibun wo dasu*), but also because they had found a new community. Implicit in this is the empowering of individual selves, achieved through participation in this common project. Once again we see this emphasis on individuality realised through community and community realised through individuality. This was alluded to by Masa when he said a person's individuality (*kosei*) is what is admired and recognised (*mitomerarete ninki ga deru*), and it is through the participation and cooperation of individuals expressing their individuality (*kosei*) that both individuality and community are strengthened.

*******

[16] *tekuno to hausu ga suki hitotachi no seikatsu to hoka no hito no seikatsu to kurabereba, donna chigai ga arimasu ka*

## Conclusion

In this chapter, I have sought to establish where and how individualists who have no apparent institutionalized framework to establish and legitimate their individuality, have attempted to do so. A trend was noted by Miyanaga (1991), whereby a 'new breed' of Japanese, the *shin jinrui*, or 'emerging individualists', as she referred to them, were heralded as the ideal employees to spearhead companies' efforts to establish post-Fordist production and marketing techniques in the mid 1980s. Expected to show initiative, Miyanaga argues, they were forced to conform, and consequently became withdrawn and non-committal. They began to look outside the workplace in order to express their individuality, because they were expected to suppress their individuality in the workplace. This, Miyanaga argues, was the beginning of a mass shunning of 'corporate centrism' (Okumura 1985) at the heart of the mainstream of Japanese society. These individualists formed 'private groups', where they could express their individuality away from the workplace.

Whether in a company like GA, where individuality is defined and legitimated through the organisational structure, command structure, and working practices of the company, or in an established company attempting to restructure for the future, or in the flexible economy, characterised by part-time, temporary, and short fixed term contract working practices, employees are separating work from the rest of their lives. This is either legitimated through being enshrined in working practices and codes of conduct, as in the case of new companies like GA, and in the working practices within the flexible economy, or it is slowly being forced on companies who expect their employees to place the company at the centre of their lives, by their employees withdrawing from participating as expected in the workplace and instead forming 'private groups'. This overall trend of separating out the work and private domain, has led to an increase in 'private groups', so that we must now consider, as Miyanaga speculated, that the 'private group' will become the primary recourse for Japanese to orientate and legitimate their individual selves and collective selves. This process marks a redefinition and resurgence of community accompanying and mutually constituting the emerging individualism, and is the way in which a 'people-centered' society seems to be emerging.

Within a company like GA, with an identifiable organisational structure and command structure which encourages and legitimates individuality, there is an identifiable discourse of individuality which indicates parameters for thought and action and defines and legitimates individualistic selves, both individual and collective. Within companies whose organisational structure and command structure, working practices and codes of conduct do not yet recognise and incorporate this new individuality which is emerging, individualistic selves look outside the workplace, not only to express their individuality, but also to seek recognition and legitimation of their individualistic selves. Those new individualists working part-time, on temporary contracts, or on short fixed-term contracts in the flexible economy, may be able to express their individuality in

the workplace. However, their places of work, as a characteristic of an emerging flexible economy, tend not to provide a framework for the establishing and legitimating of their individualistic selves, as these companies have yet to establish themselves. This does not mean that, as and when the flexible economy becomes established, employees working in the flexible economy will be unable to reference and legitimate their selves in the workplace, although the shift from a 'company-centred' society to a 'people-centred' society is likely to mean that the workplace is only one aspect of a person's condition which contributes to their sense of self. For the present, however, it looks as though these selves, like those in 'up-down' companies (*jõge gaisha*), are looking elsewhere to establish and legitimate their selves, even if they are able to express their individuality in the workplace.

In the absence of a framework to reference and define individuality, such as that provided by a company organisational structure, command structure, and working practices, as in the case of GA, I asked myself how individualistic selves in either 'up-down' companies, or working in the flexible economy seek to establish and legitimate their individuality. On the basis that individualistic selves and collective selves mutually constitute and define each other, I decided to study a 'private group' in order to apprehend and describe both these individualistic selves and the framework of community which recognises and establishes, not only their individuality, but their selves, both individual and collective. The private groups I chose to study are Techno parties (*tekuno paati*). Techno is a particular genre of music which can facilitate the reaffirmation of self and community within a given context. A Techno party in Japan is a gathering of individual selves, the majority of which are seeking to confirm and legitimate their individualistic selves while enjoying themselves. What makes these events primarily occasions to establish and reaffirm individual selves and collective selves is the fact that enjoyment is dependent upon these goals being attained.

As a first step to understanding individual selves and collective selves, and the relationship between them in a Techno party, I focused on what makes these people feel good about being at one of these parties. This is because the individual selves who constitute a voluntarily entered collectivity of selves must feel they receive some benefit from membership, otherwise they are unlikely to stay. By considering what makes them feel good about membership, I was able to establish the fundamental criteria which both define individual selves and collective self, and the relationship between them. All the people I interviewed, which provide a sample of the types of people who attend these parties, *feel* that the parties are a place where individual selves and collective selves are defined and affirmed. They comes as individuals looking to express their individuality and with the intention of encouraging others to do likewise. Participation and cooperation, together with the moral rightness of expressing one's individuality (*kosei wo narubeku sutoreito ni dasu*) and encouraging others to do likewise (*kosei wo narubeku sutoreito no dete kuru*) are the nascent fundamental ethical precepts on which selves, both individual and collective, are emerging among these young people and are being forged at these parties. This is something they learn by coming to the parties. As will become apparent in the following chapter, there are people at the parties who are there for different reasons, and who have either never been before or who have only been a limited number of times. How these 'neophytes' are judged and socialized provides

further indications of what are regarded as acceptable ways of thinking and acting, and further evidence of the very open-ended, flexible ways of interacting that are encouraged at the parties.

At a techno party, the active participation of many selves throws individual social expectations into relief where they become objectified and can be recognised. Once objectified, these recognisable social expectations attain an authority and a legitimacy which are then perceived as guidelines for thought and action. Objectification results from the sheer numbers of people looking and listening, watching and learning, checking and reflecting. Recognition comes in the form of an often incoherent but enthusiastic recollection of do's and don'ts, utterances and gestures, aimed at oneself and at others. Slowly parameters for thought and practice begin to be consensually agreed.

*******

# 7. Individuality Through Community, Community Through Individuality

## 1) Individual Selves and Collective Selves
## 2) Redefined Community 1: *Nakama* and *Tanin* Reconsidered
## 3) Redefined Community 2: *Seken* Reconsidered
## 4) Individuality Through Community, Community Through Individuality

This chapter begins by once again looking at what constitutes the individual self and its relationship to a generalised collective self, this time among those persons who attend Techno parties, whom I introduced in the previous chapter. What we see emerging are fundamental similarities to the example of GA, in the perception of individual selves, in the perception of collective selves, and in the relationship between individual selves and collective selves. A similar relationship between an individual's membership group and reference groups to that among the employees of GA also emerges, where we see a fragmentation, proliferation and diversification of reference groups, with a complementary 'loosening-up' of modes of membership. In the case of the Techno party, membership based on a diversification of reference groups, which translates on the ground as, 'you can be a member if you respect the fact that everybody is allowed and encouraged to nurture their individuality', actually becomes one of the rules of membership. We also saw this in GA, codified in the working practices, organisational and command structures of the company, and in a discourse which states that, rather than doing things in groups (*shuudan de*), work is achieved through individuals working together. Diversity of thought and action is implicit in such a discourse and becomes a basis for community.

Having first looked at the individual self and its relationship to a generalised collective self, as apparent among those persons who attend Techno parties, I then turn to specific collective selves. Consistent with the theme that individual self and collective self inform and define each other, and again consistent with what we see happening among the employees of GA, a redefining of individual selves leads to a redefinition and reconfiguration of collective selves. By looking at how the terms *tanin*, *nakama* and *seken* are regarded and employed, the topography of individual selves and collective selves is made visible through the perceived suitability of unsuitability of these terms to describe these selves. Our understanding is enhanced as a result of the discussions among the interviewees as they search for alternatives to describe themselves, each other, and the communities

which they form. In addition, the ways in which these terms are employed, whether suitable or unsuitable in this instance, also gives us an insight into the meaning of these terms.

## 7.1) Individual Selves and Collective Selves

In the case of GA, I argued that we are presented with an identifiable, objectively verifiable, affiliated group (*shozoku shuudan*). This, I argued, makes our task of establishing the limits of the affiliated group and the mode of affiliation relatively easy (**4.4**). However, I should have paid more attention to a specific question I asked all the employees: "Do you use the term 'affiliated group (*shozoku shuudan*)' at GA",[1] but I was too absorbed in how individuality in GA seems to cause the employees to feel that the word *shuudan*, 'group', is unsuitable to describe the kinds of collective selves which constitute the company, that I missed the relevance of the word 'affiliation (*shozoku*)'. It was only later, when sifting through the transcripts of the interviews with the party-goers, that I noticed that the notion of affiliation was also regarded as unsuitable to describe membership to a collective self where individuality was encouraged and given primacy. What was becoming clear was that 'group (*shuudan*)' referred to a particular structure of human relationships, not simply to *any* collectivity of persons, which is how the term has invariably been used in analyses. I realised that by arbitrarily imposing the term 'affiliated group' on a given collective self, and by talking unqualifiably about 'affiliation (*shozoku*)' to a given collective self on the basis of a set of logically derived universal criteria, I had nearly missed an important relationship between concepts. Always careful not to impose categories, and aware of the arbitrary way in which the term 'group' has been employed, this was a salutary lesson indeed.

In the case of Miyanaga's (1991) 'private group' (**6.1**), an idealised collective self, objective verification under the terms laid out at the beginning of **4.4** initially seemed quite straightforward. What is less straightforward is whether a 'private group' can be called an 'affiliated group (*shozoku shuudan*)'. On the basis of the explanation of an affiliated group given at the beginning of **4.4**, a 'private group' such as a Techno party, or a collectivity of individual selves such as Intelligent, can be regarded as an affiliated group. However, there are important reasons why the term 'affiliation (*shozoku*)', or the word 'affiliated group (*shozoku shuudan*)' is unsuitable. First and foremost, a lot of people regarded it as unsuitable. 'Affiliation (*shozoku*)' evidently carries implicit references to a particular type of membership, tying the individual member into a particular structure of relationships, to identifiable codes of conduct, to particular expectations and obligations, and to how the individual self should be presented. Following from this, 'affiliated group (*shozoku shuudan*)' does not refer to any collectivity of individual selves which satisfies the criteria of verification laid out at the beginning of **4.4**, but instead, refers to a culturally specific type of collective self which can be recognised and described by its structure, its ethics, its codes of conduct, and by the individual selves which constitute it. The types of collective selves I was discussing with the interviewees who go to Techno parties do not accord with these types of collective selves, and it will probably come as

[1] *GA de wa shozoku shuudan to iu kotoba wo tsukaimasu ka*

no surprise that, as with *seken, omote, ura, tatemae, honne,* and *giri,* described in **4.4** and **4.5**, in the minds of individual Japanese, 'affiliation (*shozoku*)' also tends to conjure images, codes, actions, and selves, associated with 'the group model of Japanese society', or more specifically with *ie* structure and ideology.

Therefore, 'affiliation (*shozoku*)' proves to be an unsatisfactory term to describe membership of a 'private' group, be it a group of friends, a Techno party, a company like Dynamix, or Intelligent as either a company or a collective self which people identify with, or indeed a company like GA, for two reasons. Firstly, this was revealed through the interviewees' reluctance to use the word 'group (*shuudan*)', to describe these various collectivities of individual selves, and secondly, due to the more flexible 'ways of interacting (*sesshi kata*)' which these individual selves who constitute these collectivities reported, and which I discovered through participation and observation. In the first case, *shuudan* and *shozoku* imply each other. This was revealed through the uncomplicated manner in which the two terms were used together by some of the employees at GA and by some of the party-goers. Those employees at GA who questioned whether *shuudan* was a suitable word to describe the collective selves which constitute the company, also found the idea of affiliation slightly unsuitable. Iwata-san's answer to the question: 'Do you use the term affiliated group (*shozoku shuudan*) at GA', is instructive:

> Yes, I do use it, especially regarding the separation of work sections. However, as far as work goes, there is no precise boundary between the group I'm affiliated to and other work groups (*hai, toku ni bunsho ni zoku shiteiru to iu ka itte ,ta no bunsho no shigoto ni kan shite nanka sakai ga kitchiri shiteiru to iu koto de wa nakute*). My group deals with networking, and if another group has a problem with something to do with networks and requested some know-how, because the feeling of being affiliated to somewhere in particular doesn't really exist, we would help (*toku ni doko ni shozoku shiteiru you na kimochi, ima no tokoro amari akiraka de wa nai no de, toku ni koko no shozoku to iu you na kitchiri shita kangae nai desu yo. Dakara bunshoteki ni wakaretemo achira no shigoto wo tetsudattari kochira no shigoto wo komatta ga atte. oen wo motomerereba tetsudattari to iu to nan de*). So even though we are separated into work sections, there isn't really a feeling of being affiliated (*kitchiri shozoku to iu ishiki de wa nai n desu*).

What jumps out of this quote for me is Iwata san's remark that his work group is able to help another work group because nobody is, strictly speaking, affiliated. Clearly, it is the very concept of being affiliated (*shozoku*) which binds an individual into a particular group, and which does not encourage association with persons affiliated to another 'group (*shuudan*)'. A remark by Masumi also indicated that *shozoku* and *shuudan* were connected, and connected through common understandings of the *ie*, the traditional Japanese household. Talking about the architect's practice she had worked for prior to joining Intelligent, she said:

> "It was something that already existed to which I became affiliated (*mou aru mono ni shozoku shiteita kara*). In other words, there was a feeling of being affiliated to a group (*tsumari shuudan ni shozoku shiteiru kanji*), and I felt like I was being used (*tsukawareteiru to iu ki ga shita*). At Intelligent I participate of my own will (*ima sanka shiteiru jibun no ishi de*)".

Rohlen (1974) and Okumura (1992) both note that a sense of belonging to 'something that already exists' is an important part of an employee's relationship with their company (**2.1**, **2.4**). In the

company Rohlen studied, feelings of indebtedness to past generations of employees and obligations to future generations were encouraged, while Okumura argues that this binding temporal mechanism, which is animated by these feelings of indebtedness and obligation, are a defining characteristic of 'corporate centrism' and an important mechanism for its reproduction. Both Rohlen and Okumura also argue that this is coopted from the *ie*. Masumi also suggests in this remark that affiliation requires an individual self to suppress their individuality, by remarking that she is 'able to use her own mind' at Intelligent. This relationship between affiliation and the expression of individuality is confirmed by employees at GA. Shinkawa-san, in answer to my question about affiliated groups in GA replied: "No, I don't use it, but you'll find them in companies like Tōshiba and Fujitsu". Matsubara-san was most explicit on this point. She answered: "Yes, we do use it, but together with these groups (*shuudan*), we also talk of 'individuality (*kosei*)' quite a lot'.

We can see then, that among collective selves where individuality (*kosei*) is given primacy, 'affiliation (*shozoku*)' is regarded as an unsuitable term to describe the way in which individual selves are joined. In other words, the structure of relationships within a group where individuality is given primacy is regarded as something other than 'being affiliated to (*shozoku shiteiru*)'. The reason why 'being affiliated to' is regarded as unsuitable to describe membership to the kinds of collective selves where individuality is given primacy, can be understood from the structure of relationships within a 'group (*shuudan*)' where membership is described as 'being affiliated to', for affiliation would seem to describe membership of a group which conforms markedly to 'the group model of Japanese society'. However, although affiliation suggests a particular type of membership, tying the individual member into a particular structure of relationships, to identifiable codes of conduct, to particular expectations and obligations, and to particular ways which the individual self should be presented, it does not tell us precisely why 'affiliation (*shozoku*)' and 'individuality (*kosei*)' are inimical. The answer lies in the particular kind of *sesshi kata*, 'way of integrating', which is implied by 'affiliation (*shozoku*)'. Yamazaki-san also explained why affiliation and the term 'affiliated group (*shozoku shuudan*)' are unsuitable to describe the situation at GA: "Things are not so rigid here. People come together as they like". Membership through affiliation, it seems, forces members to associate with other members, while urging them not to associate with persons outside 'the group (*shuudan*)', in its new restricted meaning, and only then in strictly defined and limited ways. This was clearly expressed by Iwata-san, who said that members of his group were able to help another work group because nobody is, strictly speaking, affiliated (*shozoku shiteiru*) to their work groups. In fact, the reasoning is the other way round: Persons at GA are expected to help others outside their work group, and to communicate with any member of the company, regardless of work group, in the pursuit of customer satisfaction (**5.1**, **5.2**). This unrestricted movement then renders the term 'affiliated to' unsuitable to describe the way the employees are attached to their work groups. It is only as a new kind of collective self which encourages individuality begins to appear, that the precise meaning of terms used to describe collective selves and membership of collective selves is revealed, through the unsuitability of these terms to describe the new arrangements.

We can see that 'affiliation' appears to describe a very restricted 'way of integrating (*sesshi kata*)', yet one which conforms to Nakane's (1970) *ba* 'frame' model, and to Befu's (1980) 'group model

of Japanese society'. Miyanaga (1991) makes the same point when she remarks that a major reason why individuality is feared in Japan because group 'interaction rituals' (*cf.* Goffman 1959) are so rigid and group-specific, that any variation threatens unity. More fluid *sesshi kata* seem to preclude the use of the term 'affiliation (*shozoku*)' in these examples. 'Affiliation' would seem to describe a rigid, highly group-specific type of membership, together with a strong sense of indebtedness and obligation among individual selves to a hierarchically structured, highly exclusive collective self.

The word 'group (*shuudan*)' was regarded by almost all of the employees at GA as an unsuitable word to describe the company, or collective selves within the company (**4.3**). 'Individuals working together' was the description many fell back on, as they sought to overcome the secondary meanings which the term 'group (*shuudan*)' carries. Not being 'coerced into a single way of thinking', to use Hashimoto-san's words, was, together with the more fluid ways of integrating, the secondary meanings which prevented people from using the word 'group (*shuudan*)'. Hashimoto-san was quite explicit in what 'group (*shuudan*)' meant to him: "Where everyone unanimously follows the superiors, follows the same behaviour, which means being coerced into a single way of thinking". Masumi tells the same when I asked her to compare her previous company with Intelligent. She mentioned that she was 'allowed to participate with her own mind' as a member of Intelligent, implying that she was expected to suppress her individuality and initiative at her previous company. Her reasons for leaving the practice and taking up Ichikawa san's offer at Intelligent were because she was not allowed to show initiative or express her individuality (**6.3**).

Discussion of whether a Techno party is a 'group (*shuudan*)' throws more light on what people perceive *shuudan* to mean. In response to the question 'Is a party a 'group (*shuudan*)',[2] Masako replied: "Yes, superficially it is. But maybe one where everyone has the same consciousness (*chokusetsuteki na imi wa sou dakedo minna onaji ishiki wo motta shuudan kamo ne*). Chōgi also considered that a party could be a group (*shuudan*): "In terms of the result, I guess it is a group, but one where everyone shares similar inner feelings and meet as a result of that (*kekkateki ni shuudan deshou kekkō naimenteki ni minna chikai bubun wo motte atsumatteiru shuudan to iu ka*)". However, he further qualifies what he says by saying: "But people come as individuals. They themselves, individually, want to come, they themselves, individually, want to have a good time (*demo kojin reberu de kiteiru. Jibun ga ikitai, jibun ga tanoshimitai kara to iu ishiki de kiteiru*)". Masako added: "Anything goes (*nan demo aru deshou*). The way people integrate and meet is far more fluid (*sesshi kata to iu no wa motto hadō wo kanjiru ne*), they are flexible (*nō ga yawarakai hito da to iu*)".

On the basis of what Masako and Chōgi have told us so far, a party can be called a 'group (*shuudan*)' because the individual selves who go to the parties share 'the same consciousness' and 'the same inner feelings'. This shared consciousness and shared inner feeling, however, are shared feelings of individuality. Expressing the 'inner self', to use Lebra's (1992) model, is what the party-goers have in common. As Masa told us (**6.4**): "A person is not admired because they wear nice clothes, their self is visible and this is what is acknowledged, and that is how they come to be admired.

Below is the transcript of Masumi and Takeshi trying to decide if a party is a group or not. Their

[2] *Paatii wa shuudan desu ka*

ruminations prove revealing:

**Would you call a party a group?**[3]

**Takeshi:** It's not a group, is it? At a place like that, everybody's doing something interesting. Various types of people come, and they are just enjoying themselves, that's all. It's not a group (*shuudan*), although I don't know what it is.

**Masumi:** It's an occasion, a situation (*ba ga aru, ba desu yo*) That's all. People come , that's all. It's a situation (*shichueshun*), people dance together, listen to music, talk, that's all. People have things in common, but they come as individuals (*hito no aida ni kyõtsuu no mono ga aru dakedo minna kojin ni kite*).

**Takeshi:** Yes

**What do they have in common?**[4]

**Takeshi:** What do you call it! They're not friends.

**Masumi:** It's only the energy of everybody who comes. It's a sensation (*taikan de*), a oneness (*uan desu*).

**Takeshi:** It's like everybody is your friend for one evening (*hito ban dake no tomodachi mitai ne*) (laughs).

**Masumi:** That's right, you feel the same as each other (*onaji mono wo issho ni kanjiteiru hito*)

**Takeshi:** That's right, it's not a group (*shuudan*), it's a new thing, it feels different, people relate to each other differently (*atarashii mono, atarashii kanji de, atarashii ningen kankei ga aru kamoshirenai*).

**Masumi:** It must a group, there is that oneness, that sameness, but it feels a little different (*chotto chigau kana shuudan yori demo saki ni itta you ni*). It's something to do with heart and soul (*kokoro*), that kind of thing (*sou iu kanjite imasu*).

It is on the basis of 'having things in common' which draws the party-goers to think of a party as a group. Kazuo alludes to a similar thing: "Well, everybody understands (*nanka minna de wakachau tte iu ka*), so it is that kind of thing". However, this invariably leads them to qualify this with the fact that people 'come as individuals', 'by their own will', and it is this which they perceive as what everybody has in common. Hitomi also made this point very clearly: "People come to parties by their own will (*jibun no ishi de iku*), not because their friends go. That may be the reason why they first come to a party, but nobody keeps coming simply because their friends do. Compared to other situations there are many people who respect others because they are individuals, people with their own will (*paati no naka de ishi ga tsuyoi hito ga õi n de kojin ni sonkei suru to iu hito mo õi n da to omou*)." Rika said the same: "Rather than a party being a group, there is the feeling that everybody, one by one, is making it happen (*shuudan yori mo hitori hitori ga hontõ tsukutteiru tte iu kanji*)". We heard the same descriptions from the employees at GA. This emphasis on collective selves as persons participating as individuals rather than 'suppressing their selves' and 'conforming to a group

[3] *Paatii to iu no wa shuudan to iu koto desu ka*

[4] *Saki ni itta kyõtsuu no mono wa nan to iu desu ka*

(*shuudan ni awaseru*)' informs all the descriptions of collective selves in which the individual self is recognised and nurtured.

Searching for the reason why a party is different from a group, Masumi decided it was 'something to do with *kokoro*, the heart and soul of the individual self. This indicates a fundamental shift, where commonality is recognised on the basis of expressing one's individuality, of encouraging others and allowing others to 'be themselves', which both Rika said she was able to do at the parties, and Matsubara-san is able to do at GA (3.6). Revealing the self becomes a primary code of conduct, whereas in 'the group model of Japanese society', 'denying the self (*jibun wo korosu*)', or 'suppressing the self (*kojin wo osaeru*) are primary codes of conduct (4.3), so that we can say that it is the kind of individual self, as well as the structure of relationships between individual selves, expressed as 'affiliation (*shozoku*)' in the 'group model of Japanese society', which problematises use of the word 'group (*shuudan*)' among the party-goers. It was also these reasons that caused the employees at GA to search for another way of describing collective selves within the company. Among the employees at GA and those who go to Techno parties, individuality is encouraged and nurtured through the structure of relationships and through the values of the collectivity, while hiding the self is regarded with suspicion and results in a lack of respect for that person. Such 'deception (*gomakasu koto*)', to use Masa's words, was mentioned by Keiichi as well: "There is nothing two-faced (*ura no*) or strange like that going on (*ura no nanka hen na kangae ga nai to iu ka*)".

Expressing one's individuality, one's *kokoro*, becomes a central plank of membership. This requires a concomitant acceptance of difference within the collectivity. As Ai said:

> "Many people are sensitive, but everyone thinks 'I'm me', and if you compare us to other types of people, relatively speaking, we get along well wiyh each other (*kankakuteki na hito ga ōi, demo minna jibun wa jibun to iu kanji dakara hoka no sou iu no ni kurabettara hito ne wari to tanoshiku yatteiru*). It's just a difference of interests, an unusual mood or whatever (*kyōmi no chigai gurai de hen na muudo datari suru koto tte na yō na ki ga suru*)".

Accepting difference, then, is another important hurdle to membership, and is most commonly expressed by the interviewees as 'open-mindedness (*oupen ma'indu*)', using the English words. Being open-minded means allowing others to express their will (*ishi*), as well as being willing to express one's own *kokoro*. 'Will (*ishi*)' and 'soul/mind/heart' (*kokoro*) amount to one and the same thing. Chogi, Ai, and Masako commented that one of the characteristics of people who go to parties is that they 'have their own will (*ishi ga tsuyoi hito*)', and Masumi remarked that it was the expression of *kokoro* which made it difficult to describe a party as a 'group (*shuudan*)'.

Again, we see a discourse of individuality emerging that is very similar to that among the employees at GA. The idiomatic language of the party-goers when talking about collective selves is dominated by individuals (*kojin*), individuality (*kosei*), open-mindedness (*oupen ma'indu*), flexibility (*nō ga yawarakai*), the revealing of heart and soul (*kokoro*), and of acting on one's own will (*ishi*), and again, as among the employees at GA, there has been a fundamental shift away from these terms being regarded either negatively, or ambivalently, to being regarded positively (4.3). *Kokoro* is a powerful concept in Japanese thought and sense of self, but is regarded with ambivalence. For

example, revealing one's *kokoro* is in direct opposition to 'killing the self (*jibun wo korosu*)', or 'suppressing the self (*kojin wo osaeru*)', the primary code of conduct for an individual self in a collective self which conforms to 'the group model of Japanese society'. Yet, as Lebra notes: "*kokoro* claims moral superiority...in that it is a reservoir of truthfulness and purity" (Lebra 1992: 112). Masa's explanation that respect is based on the individual revealing their true self (6.4), indicates, first, that the ethics of the self regarding *kokoro* have been inverted in this instance, but at the same time, the value accorded *kokoro* remains intact. The same connection between 'individuality (*kosei*)' and *kokoro* was noted by Moeran (1989) among the potters of Onta, and by Ikegami (1995) as part of her 'honourific individualism', between *kokoro* and *ishi*, suggesting again that the individuality which is emerging among the employees at GA and among others in Japanese society is not so much something new, but is more a redefining of the self drawing on concepts associated with the self *already present in society.*

'Will (*ishi*)' has also tended to be regarded ambivalently. *Ishi* can be interpreted as the manifestation of *kokoro*, and ordinarily has to be kept under control to conform to strict codes of conduct and thought associated with position within an 'affiliated group (*shozoku shuudan*)'. The expression *ishi ga tsuyoi*, 'to be strong-willed', can easily be imagined to carry negative connotations in situations where the individual self is ideally suppressed, yet to have resolve and to persevere (*gaman*), which are also expressions of *ishi*, are encouraged. 'To be strong-willed' implies both individuality, on the one hand, and the strength to deny the self on the other. Among the young people who attend Techno parties, *ishi* is regarded positively as an attribute of individuality (*kosei*) as well as the means to persevere. Again, there is both continuity and redefinition. Also, as with the employees at GA, a high value is placed on participation and cooperation among the party-goers (6.3), indicating that *kokoro* and *ishi* are directed as much towards others, as towards Ego. So that now, instead of community being achieved through the denial of individual selves, community is achieved through the expression of individual selves. Kazuo expressed this very clearly, although it is difficult to translate. As awkward as it sounds, the best I could come up with was: "It's sort of like a person acts, taking the lead from themselves (*jibun kara susumde iku tte kanji*)".

The discourses of individuality among those who attend Techno parties and among the employees at GA are very similar, and just as the employees at GA recognise the importance of community and of 'fitting in' (4.3), so do the party-goers. The words 'participation (*sanka*)' and 'cooperation (*kyōryoku*)' come up time and time again, as we are made aware of the importance of community in nurturing, legitimating and also releasing individuality through empowering individual selves. The structure of community among the party-goers is also very similar to the organisational structure of GA. When I asked the question, "If a party is a group (*shuudan*), how does it differ from other groups, for example a company or a tennis club?",[5] Yuka responded: "It's not like the relationships in an 'up and down' company, we relate horizontally (*jōge kaisha no tsunagari ja nakute, yoko no tsunagari da yo ne*). Everybody is equal (*minna heitō na no*)". Masako said the same: "Everybody's equal, basically (*minna byōdō da ne aru teidō*). There aren't those 'up-down' relationships between people (*amari sou iu jōge kankei wa nai*)". Commenting on 'up/down

[5] *Paatii to iu no wa shuudan to ieba hoka no shuudan to kurabereba donna chigai ga arimasuka*

relationships (*jõge kankei*)', Masumi remarked: "Everybody would say that they don't like that kind of thing (*sou iu tokoro ga minna wa 'ya da naa' tte to omou*). Age consciousness (*nenrei ishiki*) and that kind of society is not liked at all (*sou iu shakai no chii wa kirai deshou*)".

Although everybody is regarded as equal, there is a basis for discriminating between good and bad, and right and wrong. This was made clear to me when Yuka and Rika were explaining that although there are no hierarchically organised *senpai/kõhai*, 'senior/junior', relationships on the basis of position or age, appreciation of and respect for what is regarded as good and bad, and right and wrong, dictates that status differentiation does exist. In the same way as at GA, respect for individuality and individual selves is based on individual acts, not on age or position, where performance against communally recognised standards does lead to the accruing of status and respect.

> Respect is important, but there is no sense of somebody being above or below someone else. There is none of that (*sonkei suru bubun ga aru kedo, sono hito no shita ni tsuiteru toka te, sou iu kangaekata wa nai*). I'm not a member of Dynamix or any company, so what people do or what they are like in this respect, I'm not sure. But from a technical point of view, and being able to understand what their experience means, and how they think, I understand very well. So in terms of their experience and their ability, in this sense they are *senpai*. So, if the other person is *senpai* in this sense, because they have more experience and more skills, you are *kõhai*. But this is not a *senpai/kõhai* thing, and it does not mean that you keep quiet and listen to what they say. (Yuka)

It was interesting to witness Masa, Kazuo, Keiichi, Yuka, and Rika discussing this question of *senpai* and *kõhai* together. They genuinely do not feel this way about themselves and each other, instead genuinely feeling equal and respecting each other and everybody as equals. The problem they have is finding a language to express these new ways of judging and relating to persons. Clearly, casting persons as *senpai* or *kõhai* is unsuitable. However, they also appreciate that some people are more talented than others, some are more honest than others, etc. A process of 'distinguishing', and 'making distinctions' (*kejime ga aru*) (**4.5**) and value judgements, is clearly evident among these individualistic selves. Rika took the explanation a little further:

> When comparing what we are talking about with what is normally imagined when discussing *senpai/kõhai* (*keishiki teki ni wa sou iu senpai/kõhai te wakeru to*), there is a distinction to be made between people who have considerable experience etc., and those who don't. Just because we are the kind of people who express what they feel inside, doesn't mean that we don't have an understanding of what is good as good, and try to learn that ourselves. Rather than thinking that somebody is above or below, we sincerely regard that which is good simply as that, and that which is bad as bad. Because we are like that, there isn't that feeling of above and below.

When discussing *tanin*, 'others' or 'strangers', Ai discriminated on the basis of dress and demeanour (**7.3**), and after Rika had spoken, Keiichi commented: " Yes, that's true, in this sense there are different levels (*sou desu ne sou iu leberu no chigai ga aru jõtai*)".

In the case of GA, we witnessed a flattening of hierarchy and a shift in the locus of responsibility from the collective self to the individual self (**3.2**). We witness the same fundamental changes in structure and the loci of responsibility among the young people who attend these parties, in all aspects of their lives, including work. Good and Bad, Right and Wrong, are recognised and

due respect is accorded. Masumi's and Takeshi's discussion on this subject is again worth reproducing in full:

**Are there *senpai/kõhai* relationships at Intelligent? (both burst out laughing)**

**Takeshi**: Yes, there is a *senpai/kõhai* structure at Intelligent. I'm the lowest! (laughs madly)

**Whose the highest?**

**Takeshi**: Ichikawa-san.

**Masumi**: It's not really like that. We are all responsible for our work (*minna sekinin ga aru*) and Ichikawa san is the boss. We have to do our work properly and we have to work together, but we are all equal, although Ichikawa san is boss!

**What is your position, your level, in Intelligent?**

**Takeshi**: My position?! We're equal! Equal! (*byõdõ! byõdõ!*). No, I'm the lowest! (*ore wa ichiban shita desu yo*).

**Masumi**: We have no positions above and below ( *chii toka jõge kankei wa nai n desu yo*).

**Takeshi**: That's right, there aren't any.

**Masumi**: Even so, Takeshi is the youngest, so he thinks he's the lowest. Me, I don't think about it.

**Takeshi**: Really? (sounding pleased).

**Masumi**: Takeshi is an administrator, I'm a designer, for example. Others will be other things, and each will be respected for what they do (*kare wa keieisha da shi, watashi wa disaina da shi, ta no hitotachi mo DJ da shi sorezore resupecto shiteiru kara*).

Again, as with the employees at GA, we see individual selves who come together to form collective selves which foreground individuality, searching for new terms to describe their relationships with each other. They foreground individuality and equality, recognise difference and individual acts, and make moral and aesthetic judgments based on these discriminations, which requires an idiomatic language to reflect this. Also like GA, at Intelligent, Ichikawa san is boss but everybody takes responsibility for their own work, and regard each other as equals.

This equality includes gender equality. None of the women reported any kind of discrimination on the basis of gender. Masako, Hitomi, Ai, Yuka, and Rika all simply answered 'No', and when I asked again, they repeated their answers. Certainly, from my own observations, this is the case, and at a time when Japanese women are quite militant and very sensitive on the issue. Japan is an advanced industrial nation, and its female population is aware of where Japan stands in relation to Europe and the U.S. on gender issues. In the current climate of recession and economic upheaval, the country's sexual equality laws have been shown to be lacking, which has drawn attention to what was always very-near-the-surface discrimination against women. This apparent lack of discrimination among the party-goers is consistent with the female employees at GA, who also reported that they are not discriminated against, and as far as I could see there were no discriminatory practices or attitudes among the male staff. Among the party-goers, this lack of

discrimination undoubtedly springs from a genuine belief that equality, sexual or otherwise, is morally right, but there are other sides to this. These young people feel a qualitative break with their seniors, and consequently the sexes feel closer to each other in ways that transcend gender. They also feel that anything to do with what they regard as an outdated and corrupt order (1.3), is by association tainted. This includes gender relations enshrined in that order. However, although I was unable to pursue this line of enquiry, the new individualism is likely to be gender-specific, as a result of certain ways of thinking (*kangaekata*) and doing (*shikata*) being regarded as male or female, gay or straight. However, the ethical precepts which I have described do appear to transcend gender, as I would expect. For example, revealing your individuality and encouraging others to do likewise, and accepting difference, are not gender-specific.

Masumi was the only woman to say that male-female relationships among those young people who go to parties, are the same as in other walks of life. However, she was referring to 'relationships based on love (*ren'ai kankei*)' as opposed to 'arranged marriages (*miai kekkon*)'. Again, she and Takeshi proved to be good interviewees together, as their sparring revealed as much about relationships between older Japanese (Masumi is 25) and younger Japanese (Takeshi is 18), and about male female relations among these young people, as what they actually said. I reproduce below their conversation on sexual discrimination:

**What about relations between men and women at parties. Are there differences from other situations?**[6]

**Takeshi**: Yes, I think so.

**Masumi**: I don't think so!

**Takeshi**: Yes it is!

**Masumi**: Really? How!

**Takeshi**: Men and women who go to parties can speak to each other as equals (*paati ni iku hito, otoko no ko to onna no ko te, hirato ni hanaseru*).

**Masumi**: mmm OK, in that sense, maybe there isn't any discrimination between the sexes. At parties everyone is trying to communicate and come together (*tsuki aõ toshite iru n ja nai ka na*).

**Takeshi**: If you look at it the other way, at society as a whole, there is an obvious clear line between men and women, (*gyaku ni shakai toka atchi no hou da to issen motchya imasu ne. doushitemo arimasu yo*).

**Masumi**: Yes, I know, but if you think about couples, I think the relationships between men and women are much the same as in society as a whole (*sou kedo danjo kankei, koibito no kankei, sou iu no wa ren'ai kankei to iu bubun nanka ai ni kan shite wa nita you na bubun ga aru kana to omou n dakedo*).

[6] *Paatii no naka de no danjo kankei to iu no wa hoka no jõtai no danjo kankei to kuraberu to chigai ga arimasu ka*

## 7.2) Redefined Community 1: *Nakama* and *Tanin* Reconsidered

In this section, I will continue a similar line of analysis, by considering the discourses, or narratives (Cohen and Rapport 1995), of individuality and community fomenting among the employees at GA, and among the young individualists who seek to establish and legitimate their individuality, collectively, through the medium of Techno parties, demonstrating that the redefining of individual selves leads to redefinition of all types of collective selves.

In GA, 'work team (*waaku chiimu*)', is the common term used for those collective selves which are an employee's place of work, headed by a *buchō*, a department head. *Busho*, meaning 'post' or 'place of work' was also used a lot by the employees when they were referring to their work teams in discussions with me. However, the term is rather formal, and is not used among the employee's themselves when referring to their own place of work, or to somebody else's. On a day-to-day basis, everybody referred to their *busho* as their department (*bu*). Nobody used the word *uchi* in this context. Which, as I noted in 4.3, indicates a greatly reduced sense of 'inside (*uchi*)' and 'outside (*soto*)' among both the employees at GA and among the party-goers. In a collective self which recognises and encourages the expression of individuality, selves begin to interact, less as an extension of a collective self like a 'group (*shuudan*)', and more as an individual self. As I described in 6.3 , this leads to a loosening up of social boundaries, reflected in the more fluid 'ways of integrating (*sesshi kata*)', and in a lessened sense of 'us' and 'them', 'inside' and 'outside', among the party-goers and among the work teams in GA (7.1).

In addition to the employees at GA and the party-goers regarding the words 'group (*shuudan*)', or 'affiliated group ( *shozoku shuudan*)' as unsuitable, the word *nakama* also proved to be problematic. *Nakama* is a common term used to describe the small circle of immediate others surrounding Ego. In 4.3, I quoted Inoue (1977), who provides a detailed description of *nakama*, where he explained that the work group is often thought of as *nakama*. However, Sakamoto-san said: "I have never used it in GA. *Nakama* is not quite the way I feel about it (*nakama to iu kankaku to sukoshi fiiringu ga chigaimasu*). We all work together here". Shinkawa-san replied: "No, not really, I use the word 'team (*chiimu*)', or 'member (*membaa*)'". Matsubara-san also found it unsuitable: "I use it, but not really at work. Maybe a work group is *nakama*, but as a company we are all together (*kaisha ga issho*), so it's a little different here". Hashimoto-san replied: "Among the staff? No we don't. We say, 'from the same department (*onaji bu to wa sou iu katachi de*)'. *Nakama* is different". When I asked the employees how *nakama* was different, they found it difficult to explain why. A lot of people talked of *nakama* having a different 'feeling (*kanji / feeling*)'. However, it is clear that the absence of internal boundaries, referred to in this instance through the sentiment 'everybody working together', is a possible reason.

*Nakama* ordinarily refers to an immediate group of work mates or friends,[7] but because

[7] *Kenkyusha's New Japanese English Dictionary, 5th Edition. Ed. Koh Masuda. Also Inoue (1977).*

members of a given work group at GA are not confined to that work group, and are in fact expected and encouraged to mix and communicate with members of other work groups and departments (3.1, 3.2), their sense of *nakama* is greatly reduced. All the employees commented that 'all things passing directly in the norm (*directo ni iro iro na mono ga kekkõ õi n desu ne*)', and 'nothing is fixed (*tettei shiteiru mono de wa nai*)', etc. (3.2). The boundaries between groups have been virtually eliminated, only really existing for administrative and organisational purposes. As Wada-san explained: "At GA there are divisions and sections, and we use those names, and persons concerned with a particular thing are located in a place associated with that thing, but it is only tentative (*ichiõ aru n da kedo*), and the people in those places operate in a very mobile and fluid way (*ryuudõteki ni ikou*)". *Nakama* is regarded as inappropriate at GA because there is none of that feeling associated with tightly-knit intimate groups, rigidly defined internally and externally. An absence of a feeling of *nakama* at GA is closely linked to the absence of factions and cliques (*habatsu*), made impossible by the organisational structure and command structure of the company, and due to the empowering of individual selves.

In still the majority of Japanese companies, the only link that members of a work team or department will have with anybody outside that 'group' within the workplace, is through the head of the group, and consequently still not directly. Such an organisational structure encourages the development of factions and cliques (*habatsu*), what both Nakane (1970) and Rohlen (1979) refer to as the 'informal structure' of a company. This was also how Matsuda-san described Tõshiba when he worked there (3.1). The feeling engendered within these tightly-knit departmental 'groups' is what is generally thought of as *nakama* as it is used within the context of work. Consequently, it is easy to see why the word *nakama* is not regarded as suitable by the employees at GA to describe their immediate colleagues or their work groups.

The trend of separating off the workplace from the rest of an employee's life has also rendered the term *nakama* unsuitable to describe small intimate collective selves within the workplace. Used in the workplace, *nakama* strongly evokes kinship relationships (Inoue 1977), and is therefore often used in contexts which are openly based on kinship relationships. *Nakama* is a term which describes work groups in a company such as the one Rohlen (1974) studied, or Kondo (1990) studied, which is involved in many aspects of an employee's life outside the workplace. *Nakama,* I would argue, as it is used within the workplace, is part of the discourse of 'company as family', and because company and family are distinctly separated at GA (3.5), *nakama* has shifted from the domain of work to the private domain. However, nobody described their family as *nakama* either. When I asked, 'Do you describe your family or relatives as *nakama*',[8] everybody replied 'No, *nakama* are friends'.

Among the party-goers, *nakama* was the main contender in the stakes to replace *shuudan* as the word to best describe a party, although in the end everybody thought it to be unsuitable. I first asked the question, 'Do you use the word *nakama*?,[9] followed by 'What does it mean, how do you

[8] *Kazoku to shinseki wa nakama desu ka*
[9] *Nakama to iu kotoba wa tsukaimasu ka*

use it?[10] 'Friends (*tomodachi*)', or 'people who are close (*shitashii no hito*)' was the reply. Again, nobody described their family as *nakama*. Chogi answered: "*Nakama* consists of people who you trust and have confidence in (*nakama wa yappari shinrai kankei ni naritatte to iu kara sa*)". I was very surprised when Takeshi said: "Everybody who goes to a party is *nakama*". "Even people you don't know?", I asked. "People you don't speak to, yes, certainly", he replied. "Even though there are several hundred, in that situation everybody is *nakama* (*sono ba ni iru hito wa minna nakama*)". Only Takeshi said that a party was *nakama*, although everybody else clearly thought it felt like *nakama*, eventually deciding that is wasn't. This *nakama*-like quality was most clearly expressed by an exchange between Takeshi and Masumi:

> **Takeshi**: It's like everybody is your friend for one evening (*hito ban dake no tomodachi mitai ne*).
> **Masumi**: That's right, you feel the same as each other (*onaji mono wo isshio ni kanjiteiru hito*).

What made everybody wonder if a party is *nakama* is the fact that it feels as though almost everybody is a friend, that everybody "is together (*jibun ga isshio to iu koto de nakama de wa aru yo ne*)", or "has the same consciousness (*onaji ishiki wo motta kamoshirenai*)", as Masako described it, and because there is a significantly high number of people a given individual can, as ç said: "trust and have confidence in". Yuka's answer also indicated this, together with why a party is not *nakama*:

> "When you're at a party having a good time, and you see everybody else having a good time, that makes you feel very comfortable (*sugoku hottoshiteiru*), which makes you feel even more happy. In that sense, I suppose you could call it *nakama*. Although everybody is enjoying themselves in different ways (*jibun ga paati ni itta toki ni sugoku kou tanoshii to iu toki wa itsumo to iu imi de wa nakama tte ieru n ja nai kana demo sorezore ga tanoshindeiru*)".

Feeling comfortable and having something in common with those around you are clearly feelings associated with *nakama*. However, Yuka then realises that everybody is actually enjoying themselves in different ways, which leads her to conclude that a party cannot be *nakama*. Rika said the same:

> "Mmm. I think the word *nakama* is a little too much, because the other people at a party have other life-styles. But even so, at these parties, people can really help each other, which is like *nakama*, but it's not *nakama* (*nakama to iu to kekkõ ii sugi na bubun mo aru kana to omou kedo. Sono hito no hoka ni seikatsu toka aru kara demo hontõ ni sono paati no naka de wa minna ga ii jõtai de tasuke attari toka, kyõryoku shitari toka dekiru shi sore wa nakama no you ni mieru kedo chotto chigau to omou n*)".

Hitomi and Ai's answers followed the same form as Yuka and Rika, their thoughts progressing in a similar way. My initial question was, 'How does a party differ from other groups in terms of human relationships'?[11]

> **Ai**: Is a party a particular kind of group or is it *nakama*? Well, a party is one's own group, I guess (*paati wa jibun ni totte no shuudan ja nai*). And in that sense I think that it is like *nakama* (*paati ni jibun ni totte no shuudan to iu ka nakama to iu no wa iru to wa omotteiru watashi wa. Zenin ja nakute sono naka ni ippai iru tte kanji*). Not everybody is, but

[10] *Nakama to iu no wa tsukaikata wo agetekudasai*

[11] *Paatii to iu no wa hoka no shuudan no ningen kankei to kurabereba donna chigai ga arimasu ka*

it feels like it.

**Do you use the word *nakama* at parties?**

**Hitomi:** Not especially. The word itself is different, it has a different meaning, although the meaning of *nakama* could be applied to a party, there is that sensation (*kotoba jitai wa chigau to omou kedo sou iu imi mo fukumareteiru kamoshirenai sou iu kankaku ga aru n ja nai*). *Nakama* are friends, really.

**Ai:** I don't use it especially either. Even though many people who go to parties agree about many things, there is still a lot of separation (*paati ni iku hitotachi wa onaji kangaekata ga aru no ni sugoku nanka wakareteiru you na ki mo suru*). Not surprisingly some people are into this, some people are into that. There is a sense that there is a lot of difference (*yappari kou iu no suki, kou iu no suki de sugoku wakareteiru you na ki ga suru*).

Hitomi reports that there is the sensation (*kankaku*) of *nakama* at parties, that the meaning implied by *nakama* (*imi wo fukumatteiru*) is present at parties. Feelings of interdependence, of cooperation, of being connected, of feeling good, and of being able to trust others and having confidence in them, are what the interviewees feel when they are at a party, and it is these feelings and sentiments which they associate with *nakama*. Therefore, the *nakama*-like qualities of the parties are the qualities which make people feel good and keep people coming, and which creates the setting for the establishment and legitimation of the individual selves who attend. Consequently, it is the *nakama*-like quality which is crucial to the success of the parties in their mutually reinforcing twin roles of making people feel happy and making them feel good about themselves. Cooperation, participation, being able to 'be yourself (*jibun wo subete dasu koto ga dekiru*)', and all the things which make people feel good about attending a party which I discussed in 6.3 are reminiscent of *nakama*. Ai described the parties as 'events (*ebento*)', when we were discussing if a party is a 'group (*shuudan*)', and Masumi thought it was an 'occasion' or 'situation (*ba ga aru, ba desu yo*)': "People come, that's all. It's a situation (shichueshun). People dance together, listen to music, talk, get to know each other, and feel good".

In 6.2, I suggested that 'private groups' provide a framework for constructing and legitimating the individuality of persons who currently have no other institutional or formal means of doing so, and that as a result of this process of establishment and legitimation of selves, 'private groups' provide individuals with an index and reference for managing and negotiating other situations, including work. This is particularly true of the Techno party, where the scale alone intensifies the enjoyment and magnifies the feelings of personal empowerment, of feeling good about one's self, and the rightness of one's place in the scheme of things. It is the *nakama*-likeness of the parties which make these results possible, for *nakama* is those people and that place where the individual self can 'be itself', where it feels it is safe and protected, wanted and supported.

According to the party-goers, *nakama* implies a high degree of congruity of thought, lifestyle, and way of thinking among those who constitute *nakama*, and although there obviously is a high degree of congruity between the party-goers, there is also difference. It is the recognition and legitimation of difference which makes it difficult for the interviewees to regard a party as *nakama*, even though it feels the same as *nakama*. Although on a strictly semantic level, the interviewees say a party is not *nakama* because there is difference, the ethics and codes of conduct which these people

adhere to are built on the fundamental ethical precept of recognising and respecting difference. Consequently, the respect of and celebration of individuality and difference is also something they have in common, so *nakama*-ness develops and is keenly felt for this reason, too, even if, semantically, a party is not regarded as *nakama*. Again, it is because a party is not strictly speaking *nakama*, that it is possible for such a large collective self to attain *nakama*-ness, and be effective in this way. Not only is *nakama* fixed in the imagination as a small collective self, the degree of similarity which defines *nakama* can only be maintained on a small scale. Not even a belief that all members are similar could be maintained on the scale of a Techno party. Consequently, it is the embracing of difference which opens up the possibility of intimacy on a much larger scale. It is mass agreement on the ethics of individuality, embracing open-mindedness through the expressing of one's individuality and encouragement of others to do like-wise, which actually creates the feeling of *nakama*-ness. Once again, we see individuality and community being achieved through the expression of individuality, rather than through its suppression.

The *nakama*-ness of the parties provides a setting for these individual selves to feel comfortable enough to openly and relaxedly 'be themselves'. The feeling of *nakama*, the feeling that everybody is a friend, makes people feel comfortable enough to literally 'try out' their individuality in the first instance, to integrate and mix in a far more fluid way with people they've never seen before or met before, in other words, in public. As Keiichi said: "All you have to do is go, and it's as if your friends just grow and grow. That is very pleasant". It is then as a result of many people experiencing this together, that expressing one's individuality becomes an acceptable and 'normal' way of being-in-the-world.

*******

The interviewees' perception of *tanin*-ness at Techno parties conforms to their perception of *nakama*-ness. In answer to my question, 'Are there *tanin* at parties?"[12] Masako, Takeshi, and Chogi spoke of *tanin* as individual selves other than Ego. Consistent with the employees at GA, some people regarded *tanin* in this way. However, while some of the employees at GA regard *tanin* as persons whom 'Ego doesn't know', whom 'Ego 'has nothing to do with (*kakawatta no nai hito*)', or 'people I only acknowledge in passing (*aisatsu shita koto aru gurai shikanai hito*)', as Ozawa-san described them (4.3), for many of the party-goers, *tanin* is the term used to describe persons 'Ego has nothing in common' with. I asked the party-goers, 'Are people you don't know, but who have the same way of thinking and consciousness as you, also *tanin*?[13] Yuka replied immediately:

> Ahh! No, these people do not feel like *tanin*. They may be people I don't know, but they are all enjoying themselves in their own way on the same wavelength as me. There are many people like that, to whom I might say, 'hello' (*Ah! sou iu hito wa tanin to wa kanjinai! shiranai hito dakedo onaji hōkōsei de tanoshindeiru tte omeru hito tte takusan iru no ne* 'Hello! *tte dare ni demo ieru.*). There are also people who are not at all like that as well, and I sort of feel estranged from them. These people are *tanin* ( *demo mattaku sou ja nai hitotachi mo iru. Sono hitotachi no koto wo watashi wa tanin to kanjiru shi*).

---

[12] *Paatii no naka de wa tanin imasu ka*

[13] *Paatii no naka de wa onaji ishiki wo motta shiranai hito mo tanin to iu hito desu ka*

Such a perception of people Ego doesn't know as 'not being like *tanin*', conforms to the perception that many of the interviewees had, of people Ego doesn't know 'being like *nakama*'. This is logical, for 'being like *nakama* implies 'not being like *tanin*'. In Yuka's case, this is revealed when she says, people she doesn't know, but who are on 'the same wavelength (*onaji hōkōsei de*)' as her, are not *tanin*. Bearing in mind Takeshi's view that everybody at a party is *nakama*, it is also not surprising that he doesn't think anybody at a party is *tanin*. When I asked him, 'Are there *tanin* at parties', he replied:

> No, I don't think so. Naturally, the first time you go to a party, everybody except your friends is *tanin*, but after you've been a few times and you are used to it, there are no *tanin*. People who understand what it's all about are not *tanin* (*paati ni narete kitara tanin ja nai n ja nai desu ka ne. Sono ba no fun'iki ga wakatchatteiru hito wa tanin ja nai*).

There are those, as Takeshi says, who maybe have come to their first party, who regard people they don't know as *tanin*. These newcomers might be regarded as *tanin*. Then there are those who may have read about Techno parties in a magazine somewhere, and have come along to see what all the fuss is about. Yuka explained:

> Are there *tanin*... Let me give you an example. Apparently, Techno is really fashionable, yes? and there are people who like fashionable things. Therefore, there are people who like fashionable things just because they are fashionable, who come to parties. If you look in the latest magazines, or go to the beauty salon, 'Techno is it', is written all over. When these things happen, everybody jumps on the bandwagon, as they do in Japan. There are certainly people like this at parties, and in this sense I might call them *tanin*. However, when they come to see what it's all about, maybe they feel something and gradually become people who are able to share in it all.

What begins to emerge from the deliberations of whether something is *nakama* or *nakama*-like, or whether somebody is *tanin*, is that these judgments are not based on relationships defined by affiliation to a collective self. The relationships among the party-goers, as well as the employees at GA, are defined by Ego, an individual self, subjectively, on the basis of Ego's feelings about their relationship with a given other. Consequently, there are degrees of *nakama*-ness and *tanin*-ness within GA and within the parties which are recognised and understood. At GA, there is no, 'this person's in my work team so they must be *nakama* because that's what *nakama* is', regardless of how they personally feel about that person. And in the parties, there is no 'this person must be *tanin* because I've never met them before'. The new individualism empowers individual selves to make their own decisions about who they associate with, what kind of a relationship an individual self has with another, and how they perceive it. This fundamental change to the way in which social groups are created, recognised, and defined among the employees at GA and among the party-goers, is an important aspect of individualism ushered in by the empowerment of individuals. Within the workplace, whether it is GA, Dynamix, or Intelligent, we see individual selves being called upon to express their individuality by showing initiative and by being asked to take responsibility. Outside the workplace, showing initiative and taking responsibility primarily manifests itself as individual selves choosing who they associate with, what kind of relationships they have, and how they interpret those relationships.

On what basis do these individual selves make these judgments? If they are not making

them on the basis of who is affiliated to which collective self, they must be making subjective judgments against personal references which satisfy an ethics of individuality. We saw among the employees at GA, how empowering individuals and encouraging individuality leads to a fragmentation and diversification of reference groups (**4.4**). *Seken*, as it is ordinarily understood, is the reference group of a particular affiliated group (Inoue 1977), and consistent with a fragmentation and diversification of reference groups, a sense of *seken*, a sense of needing to be careful about *sekentei*, and an awareness of *seken nami* standards all diminished among the employees at GA. By discussing whether a party is *seken*, whether the party-goers are conscious of their *sekentei* at parties, and whether they perceive any *seken nami* standards at parties, I aim to demonstrate that a similar process of fragmentation and diversification to the that among the employees at GA is occurring among the party-goers, and that this in turn will indicate that emerging individuality and the fragmentation of reference groups accompany each other in a dynamic process, as a result of a redefining of the individual self.

*******

### 8.3) Redefined Community 2: *Seken* Reconsidered

In 4.4 I noted how Inoue described *seken* as "something which cannot be anything other than vague and ambiguous (*bakuzen toshita aimai na mono to narazaru wo enai de arou*)" (Inoue 1977: 71). Inoue also states that "it is hard to see *seken* as anything other than a number of individuals". Chogi also described *seken* as difficult to define and comprising of individual selves:

> *Seken* has no defined shape (*katachi no nai mono*). It resides inside oneself (*doko ni aru ka to iu, jibun no naka ni aru mono*). It is an individual's value standards which you yourself set, and which you yourself judge, everyone one by one (*jibun ga kachi kijun wo kimete, jibun de handan suru koto da, minna hitori hitori de*). For people who can't make those judgments, *seken* exists somewhere else.

Abe describes *seken* as: "a network of face-to-face relationships where everybody knows each other by sight (*kao mishiri no kankei*)" (Abe 1994: 59). Consequently, there would seem to be agreement that *seken* resides in individual selves, not outside them somewhere. Although Chōgi's comment suggests that *seken* for some does not reside in the individual self, I think we can interpret him to mean, some people rely on the judgment of others. This is reminiscent of Doi's (1973), and Lebra's (1992) condition of *jibun ga nai*, 'to be without a self' (**4.3**). Given that *seken* resides in individual selves, *seken* manifests itself through a person's *sekentei*, either by an individual commenting on what others do, such as 'You have to do it this way', or by an individual responding to such a remark or responding directly to a *seken nami*, 'conforming to *seken*', standard. Either way, we can see that it is individuals who police and sanction each other, not some authority or body of legislation. And indeed, this is where we can differentiate *seken* from judicial authority. We can also separate *seken* from 'common knowledge (*jōshiki*)',[14] for *seken* is highly group specific, even though this can involve a number of identifiably distinct groups which are tied in some way, such as a trade association, or dependent on each other, such as companies that do business with each other, or a *keiretsu*. Miyanaga (1991) states that Japanese groups which conform to the 'group model of Japanese society', have highly group-specific 'interaction rituals' (**6.1**). These interaction rituals she mentions are in fact *seken nami* standards, which do vary from group to group. Not only do they vary from group to group, as I argued in **1.3** *seken* is often more coercive than judicial law and can actually contravene judicial authority, causing members of *seken* to break the law.

The way to establish the existence of *seken* is by establishing whether individual selves, in a given situation, feel they 'have to take care of their *sekentei* (*sekentei wo mamoranakereba ikenai*)', and

---

[14] *Jōshiki*, like *seken* does reside in individual selves. However, it is not group specific like *seken*. I did not discuss *jōshiki* with either the employees' at GA or the party goers, however, I regard *jōshiki* as J.S. Mill regarded 'common sense morality': "the accumulated wisdom of mankind about the desirable and undesirable consequences of actions" (Schneewind 1994: 152). *Jōshiki* is often translated as 'common sense', but it does not mean common sense, as in: ' she has common sense = she is sensible', as it tends to be used in English. Neither does *jōshiki* refer to all mankind, as Mill suggests. *Jōshiki*, as 'common sense morality', primarily refers to a body of knowledge concerning Right and Wrong, which members of a given collective self share, for example, a nation or ethnic group. The common knowledge of a particular section of society, such as that discussed by Bourdieu (1984) in his study of taste, can also be regarded as *jōshiki*.

whether they feel there are *seken nami* standards which they feel forced to acknowledge, or desire to acknowledge. These standards can influence how people dress, where they go, what they do, who they associate with, etc. This is how the employees at GA established for themselves whether *seken* existed within GA. Within the company itself, everybody except Muroya-san said that *seken*, *seken nami* standards, and the feeling of needing to be careful about their *sekentei* was absent. This is because, to use Hashimoto san's words, the particular kinds of social relationships which create *seken* and *seken nami* standards, and which require individual selves to be careful about their *sekentei*, have been 'demolished (*kuzushita*)' (**4.4**).[15]

Among the party-goers, nobody considered that a party might be *seken* except Ai, and Takeshi and Masumi who reported a slight feeling of *seken* at parties. When I asked Takeshi if he felt the presence of *seken* at parties,[16] he replied: "A little bit to begin with (*saisho wa chotto arimasu*)". Ai had a stronger sense: "Yes, I have a sense of being a part of *seken* at parties (*paati demo seken no naka no you na ki ga suru*)". She then thought about it for a moment and added:

> There can only be one *seken*, and at parties there are many different types of people (*seken ga hitotsu no you na ki ga suru. nanka paati ni wa ironna hito ga iru n da*). Parties are more open and not so rigid (*motto oupen na to omou, sou iu kataku naku*). Whether I'd use the term *seken*, I don't know. *Seken, sekentei, dotchi nan darou!* what is all this!....But in a club I do always have that sense [of *seken* and *sekentei*] hanging around me (*kurabu no naka ni itsumo watashi no naka de wa sou itta imi wo mochiawaseteiru*).

In Ai's case, she feels the presence of *seken*, but then goes over in her mind what *seken* is, as she understands it, and decides that it doesn't fit. However, for Ai, there clearly is a *seken*-ness about the parties. Her point: "There can only be one *seken* and at parties there are many different types of people" describes how everybody, including the employees at GA, perceive *seken* as a moral framework which imposes uniformity and conformity of thought and act. The simple fact that there are perceived to be 'many different types of people' at parties, makes it impossible for a party to be *seken*. Consistent with her train of thought that *seken* implies uniformity of thought and act, Ai also comments that: "parties are more open and not so rigid (*motto oupen na to omou, sou iu kataku naku*)". She also has the common perception of *seken*, noted by Lebra (1992) (**4.4**), as something which polices and constrains the individual self. This is revealed when she says: "Even in a place where I have so much fun and can be myself, I still feel it ( *jibun wo dashite tanoshimi kittenai tokoro wa aru no kamoshirenai*)".

Masumi also thought that there was a slight sense of *seken* at parties (*chotto aru kana*), but like Ai, decided that a party cannot be *seken* because: "everybody is just being themselves". Individual selves 'being themselves', implies difference and diversity, not uniformity, consequently Masumi perceives a party as unlike *seken* for the same reason. Even though they say a party cannot be *seken*, it seems as though both of them perceive the conventions, codes of conduct, and ways of thinking which are generally acknowledged by those who attend the parties, as *seken*-like in some way. Once again, as with *shuudan* and *nakama* (**7.1**, **7.2**), we see that redefined individual selves coming together, results in a redefined collective self which renders familiar terms unsuitable to describe

---

[15]The word 'demolish (*kuzusu* transitive, *kuzureru* intransitive)' was also used by Masumi, Ai, and Keiichi in the same way.

[16]*Paatii i no naka ni wa seken to iu jitai no you na ki ni narimasu ka*

these new collective selves. Yet, at the same time, there is evident similarity between these new redefined collective selves and other more familiar collectivities, so that we can identify the continuities and the changes.

Both Ai and Masumi regard *seken* as an oppressive 'force (*ikioi*)', to use Inoue's (1977) term (**4.4**), which they associate with a particular structuration of community where individual selves are expected to conform to uniform patterns of thought and action. Within the collective selves in which they find themselves, where 'individuality (*kosei*)' is encouraged and legitimated, pressure to conform is markedly reduced as a result of individual selves being recognised and legitimated. Boundaries are less rigid and exclusionary and 'integration rituals' are less specific to a given collective self, focusing instead on general individual qualities (**7.1**).

*Seken* would seem to be one of the secondary manifestations which the term 'group (*shuudan*)' brings to the minds of all the interviewees, for the interviewee's perception of *seken* is intimately associated with having to be aware of who one is addressing and how to act, with a feeling of being constantly watched and listened to, and of being pressurized to conform to a single way of thinking and doing. These feelings were described by the staff of GA as having to 'deny their self (*jibun wo korosu*)', as Iwata san put it, or 'suppress their self (*kojin wo osaeru*)', as Matsubara san expressed it when describing an individual's (*kojin*) relationship to a 'group (*shuudan*)' (**3.5**, **4.3**). When discussing *sekentei*, Ozawa-san explained that this suppression took the form of people saying: "This is the done thing, you!", or "People are...". Iwata san said the same : "You will hear people say, 'You have to do things this way', something associated with *seken* which you won't find at GA" (**4.4**).

Even though Ai rationalises that a party can't be *seken*, her sense of *seken* at parties derives not only as I suggested it might, from the particular feeling a person has in any situation where they are being judged and they are judging others, but because she does actually have an awareness of *sekentei* at parties. She also had a noticeably different attitude to *tanin* than the other interviewees, from which Hitomi, quite firmly, distanced herself when I interviewed them together. Ai was the only interviewee who said that she is aware of *sekentei* at parties, although she added she wasn't bothered about it: "It's there, but I'm not bothered about it (*aru kedo ki no shinai nani mo betsu ni*)". However, from other comments she made, she does bring a sense of *seken* with her to the parties. During the interview, she made a number of remarks when we were discussing *tanin* which indicated that *tanin* were not simply people Ai had nothing in common with. Ai was classifying them and categorising them negatively on the basis that their *sekentei* did not conform to hers. *Sekentei* is important to her at parties, and like Inoue (1977), she tries to deny it (**4.4**), but unlike the other party-goers, who clearly had either no regard for, or awareness of *sekentei* at the parties, Ai couldn't always hide it, just as Inoue described of himself (Inoue 1977: iii) Her marking of social space was noticeably more territorially defined than the other party-goers. Ai is more judgmental and dismissive of persons she doesn't know on the basis of certain standards she has, which she then projects onto others. These are recognisable characteristics of *seken* manifesting itself through individuals, who prejudge and police others with their opinions, reinforcing their own sense of self which is dependent for its legitimacy and authority on others also complying to *seken* standards.

Ai has a strong personality, but these differences between Hitomi and Ai are not simply due to differences in personality or character. It is clear that Ai perceives social space in a less fluid, more rigid way, than Hitomi. As might be expected, the other side of having a sense of *seken* and *sekentei*, is clearly marking *tanin* negatively, and this is how Ai's sense of *seken* manifested itself, even though she rationalised that parties are not *seken*.

**Are there various sekentei?**

Ai: There are, but I'm not bothered about it.

**What are you aware of at parties?**

Ai: I want to be fashionable when I go to a party (laughs). But a party is an enjoyable thing, so there isn't really anything to be concerned about (*amari tanoshii koto dakara ki ni naru koto wa amari nai*).

Hitomi: I don't really feel *sekentei* myself, so I don't really think about it (*jibun de ki ni suru sonna ni kangaeta koto nai*). Other than that, I'm aware that everybody is there to have a good time, and that nothing else matters.

**Do you have to be careful about *sekentei* at work?**

Ai: Well, I can't be late, can't take time off just when I like. It's not an opportunity to relax and play, so yes.

Hitomi: Well, work is work, but *sekentei*, these days? I'm not so sure. There are things you have to do, that's all (*shigoto wa shigoto deshou, tashika ni wari to taihen kedo sekentei to iu ka ima dou kana. yaranakya ikenai koto ga aru*). Certainly a lot people I work with are aware of *sekentei*, but many don't care, particularly the younger ones.

**At parties?**

Ai: Yes, I have a sense of being a part of *seken* at parties (*paati demo seken no naka no you na ki ga suru*). The other side of that is that I often look at other people and think 'Whaaaa, look at that!' (*gyaku ni paati ni kiteiru hito wo mite 'waaaaa' to omou*). Honestly, there are *tanin* but we're there to have a good time, so maybe I'm a little unfair (*matomo de chotto tanin goto, demo sore wo tanoshindeiru kara, chotto watashi dake zurui kamoshirenai*).
Hitomi: I don't agree with Ai about the *tanin* thing. We're all there to have a good time and that's great (*tanin goto tte iu wake ja nai kedo minna tanoshindeiru no wa sugoi ii to omou kara*). Everybody is very open and friendly (*minna oupen de friendly to nari*).

Ai: Yes, but what I meant is....we're all there to have a good time together, for sure, what I meant was...well, maybe I'm always unfair! (*watashi datte, issho ni tanoshinde demo sou iu nan da watashi wa itsumo zurui* (laughs).

Ai remarks twice that 'maybe she is unfair'. What she is referring to is her habit of prejudging people because they do not conform to her way of thinking and doing, often dressing in Ai's case. She believes that people should be judged individually, not by reference to whether they conform to her own ways of thinking and doing, but her sense of *seken* catches her unawares sometimes.

*Sekentei* is a 'face', the 'presentational self', which the individual draws like a veil over the 'inner self' where the *kokoro*, the 'heart/mind/soul', resides (Lebra 1992). *Sekentei* is the embodiment of a morality which requires individual selves to suppress their selves (*jibun/kojin*) and present a 'face': *sekentei* literally means the appearance or condition of *seken*. Consequently, *sekentei* is, by its very nature, regarded as superficial and deceitful by persons who regard the expression of the self,

through a person's individuality (*kosei*), as the only morally correct way to be-in-the-world, and the only basis on which to judge a person. By being aware of *sekentei*, Ai is, by her own standards, prejudging people and ignoring their individuality. Yet, Ai is also a person who avidly respects and admires individuality in others, and believes that individuality generates community, not decimates community (6.3). This might appear contradictory, but we should not be surprised that individual selves are matrices of conflicting values and apparently incommensurable desires. Ai believes that being able to express her individuality and being expected to encourage others to do likewise, rather than being expected to suppress her individuality and making sure others do the same, is morally correct. Yet, despite this, she does have a sense of *seken* and *sekentei*, which she attempts to override. Consequently, even though Ai does have a sense for *seken*, which manifested itself in her answers to direct questions about *seken* and through her attitudes to *tanin*, she also has a strong dislike of it. This is indicated by the way she refers to her attitudes to *tanin* in the conversation with Hitomi, above, as *zurui*, which means 'deceitfully', and in the conversation below, where she was talking about her colleagues at work and whether they go to parties:

> Well, not surprisingly, they show no interest particularly. They hate the music, they say. That's how they've classified it and they won't change their minds. Everybody at work likes hip-hop, but the truth is that's just a fashion. In fact that whole attitude really makes me angry (Ai was getting quite angry here). That's *seken* for you and I want nothing to do with it (*shokuba no hito wa minna hip hop ga suki de. Jissai ni ima hayachatteiru shi, dakara watashi sugoku seikatsu ni mi ni tsumasareteimasu yo. Sore ga seken da to watashi wa toranai*).

Her denial of *seken* and her strong negative feelings about it seem to accompany her self-awareness of it. Her *sekentei* is a sensibility which rises up in her, a particular way of mapping the social world which she doesn't agree with. It catches her unawares, just as Inoue (1977) described himself, and she doesn't like it.

The explanations of *seken* and *sekentei* given by the party-goers conform to those given by the employees at GA. Chogi explained *sekentei* as: "conforming to what is around you (*sekentei to iu no wa mawari ni dōchō suru to iu koto deshyo*)". Masako as: "*sekentei* is worrying about what people are going to think about you (*tanin ni dou mirareru ka to iu ki ga suru koto deshiyou*)". However, Chogi continued: "But that's not important to me (*sore wa hitsuyō ja nai*). Not bothering people is more important (*hito ni meiwaku wo ataeranai kara*)". 'Not bothering people (*hito ni meiwaku wo kakenai*)', is the common expression used to describe what *sekentei* is supposed to achieve, while conforming to *seken nami* standards is generally regarded as the way Ego refrains from bothering people. Chogi remarks that *sekentei* is unimportant to him, but that 'not bothering people' is important to him. Masa made the same distinction:

> When I walk down the street, I'm extremely aware of the gap between myself and others (*michi aruiteiru to yappari kou gyappu wa sugoi kanjimasu yo*). I walk down the street with that awareness, and occasionally people look at me and snigger. But I'm me and I am just being myself, nothing particular (*ore wa ore de betsu ni sore ga jibun de jibun dakara*). People say things but it doesn't bother me at all. *Sekentei* is about not causing any problems for anybody, supposedly (*da sou desu*). If you do give somebody a hard time, that is unacceptable, and you shouldn't do it. So, if I don't do that, what ever else I do has got nothing to do with *sekentei*. As far as things like *sekentei* go, I have the self-confidence to live my life the way I think I should. When somebody sees that, they may

> dislike it and say something. You know the kind of thing. But that is just how some people think, and it doesn't bother me particularly. So I don't really have the feeling that I have to adjust to others, which is what *sekentei* is usually thought of as being.

Rather than saying that *sekentei* is about conforming to others (*hito ni awaseru koto*), like Chogi, Masa regards *sekentei* as about 'not bothering others'. He says that *sekentei* involves not causing any problems for anybody, and he uses the common expression I mentioned above, *sekentei to iu ka sore ga hontõ ni hito ni meiwaku wo kakeru tte iu no wa*, to express this moral imperative. However, he then says: "If I don't do that, whatever else I do has got nothing to do with *sekentei* (*nani shitemo sekentei toka sou iu no wo kankei nai to omou*)". Masa is clearly defining *sekentei* conventionally, in the sense that *sekentei* is 'not bothering others (*meiwaku ni kakenai*) but he limits the meaning to exclude conforming. Clearly, under *seken* rules, 'not bothering somebody' is achieved by conforming to others, but both Chogi and Masa are invoking standards for what constitutes 'bothering' somebody which does not involve taking care of *sekentei*. Like Chogi, *sekentei* is unimportant to Masa. He says he doesn't 'feel (*ki wa amari nai*)' the need to adjust: "I don't really have the feeling that I have to adjust to others, which is what *sekentei* is usually thought of as being. I just don't have that need to adjust it (*dakara hito ni awase you tte ki wa amari nai. sono iwayuru sekentei tte iu ippan no hito to awasenakya ikenai to iu riyuu mo nai shi, awaseru ki mo nai*)".

Takeshi also marks a distinction bet ween 'not bothering people' and *sekentei*, and his reason for this is very clear: "we come together as individuals (*watashitachi wa kojin kojin de atsumatte kara*)".

> *Sekentei* is conforming to others (*sekentei to iu no wa hito ni awaseru koto deshou*), but we come together as individuals, so we say, rather than take care of *sekentei*, just don't cause trouble for others (*watashitachi wa kojin kojin de atsumatte iru kara sekentei to iu yorimo tanin ni kakechau to ne tsumari jibun igai no hito ni kakechau to yabai desu yo ne*)"[17].

*Sekentei*, it seems, is primarily about conforming rather than not causing others trouble. Under *seken* rules, one implies the other, but the difference is apposite. Obviously if Ego is expected to conform, then some kind of non-conformity may well bother others. However, if conformity is not a moral precept, then what constitutes 'bothering people', will certainly be redefined, as a result of difference being embraced. Takeshi, Masumi and I were sitting on the sofas in the corner of the shop at Intelligent in Ebisu discussing all this. Masumi agrees with Takeshi, however her emphasis is subtly different:

> What Takeshi says is right. Don't upset someone or make them feel bad (*nanka iya na omoi, fuyukai na kanji ataenai kagiri ni oite wa*). There are many people who have different values and outlooks (*chigau kachikan wo motteiru hito mo ippai iru kara*), so you can at least speak politely to these people (*sou iu hito ni wa ki wo tsukete hanashite, sono kurai*).

Instead of saying 'we are individuals, therefore we ignore *sekentei*', Masumi's emphasis is not on Ego, but on Other. She says: 'There are many people who have different values and outlooks (so *sekentei* is unsuitable)'. Her point is not that Ego is an individual and consequently should be recognised as such, although I know she believes that, but instead that Other is an individual and

[17]Yama clarifies *tanin* as *jibun igai no hito* because he used the meaning of *tanin* as 'strangers', 'people Ego doesn't know personally' in the discussion of whether there are *tanin* at parties. In this case he uses *tanin* as meaning 'any person other than Ego'.

should be treated as such. The emphasis is important, for it indicates, in Masumi's case at least, that recognition of individuality is not solely ego-centric, but is offered to embrace others, as well as desired for oneself. Takeshi's comment was not ego-centric particularly, and I am not contrasting the two, but I think the fact that Masumi phrased her comment in the way that she did is noteworthy. She believes that speaking politely is one 'interaction ritual' which everybody understands. Ijiri (1991), judging from his comments on the students' way of communicating with the older salarymen, discussed in **5.4**, might think otherwise.

What we are witnessing is individual selves and collective selves who refer to a moral framework that is different to *seken*. Consistent with the redefining of other aspects of individual selves and collective selves, moral structures are also being redefined. *Seken* is clearly a coercive, group-specific moral universe, as all the examples of how *seken* is manifested, given by the employees at GA and by the party-goers, are of the type: 'You *should*', 'You *have* to', or 'you *must*' statements, all of them moral imperatives seeking to coerce individual selves into uniform ways of thinking and acting in specific situations, suppressing individuality (*kosei*) and difference, and propagating an ideology of exclusivity and homogeneity. Instead, moral guidelines among the employees at GA or among the party-goers foreground individual empowerment, recognise individuality (*kosei*) and difference, and do not seek exclusivity and homogeneity.

The individual self is perceived as required to 'express its self (*jibun wo dasu / kosei wo dasu*)', among the party-goers, in the same way as the employees at GA. Yet even for the party-goers and the employees at GA, *sekentei* is regarded as a conventional way of being-in-the-world, whereby the individual self presents a 'face' (Lebra 1977) to *seken* and hides their self. Sakamoto-san told me: "Even a little away from the company [*sekentei*] becomes very important". The employees at GA and the party-goers realise that they are a minority, but see things going in the direction they are heading. As Hashimoto-san, head of General Affairs at GA remarked: "I think we are ahead here" (**4.3**).

Expressing individuality is becoming an acceptable way of being-in-the-world. We can say this because of the discourses of individuality that are circulating through the corridors of power, together with the emergence of individuality as a positive human characteristic within the mainstream, indicated by the example of GA and the party-goers. Nevertheless, for still the majority of the population, in the course of their lives, going about their daily business, individual selves are expected to suppress their 'true feelings (*honne*)', to hide their 'inner self' where their *kokoro* resides, and present their *sekentei*, a 'public behaviour (*tatemae*)' self. In **4.5** I explained why I regard this 'two-tiered self' (Bachnik 1992, 1994; Tobin 1992) as unsatisfactory, but even so, Japanese do clearly perceive *kokoro* and *sekentei* as residing in two separate, distinguishable parts of the self (*jibun*). Separating the self into an inner and outer self is, in my opinion, difficult to sustain on the ground.

*Seken* is regarded as outside the self, watching and listening, but resides within the individual self, made manifest through a person's *sekentei*. The idea that *seken* resides in some outer part of the self, while *kokoro*, which is essentially what is being referred to as the 'inner self', remains detached and unaffected by *seken* is difficult to imagine. In the same way, it is difficult to imagine that a person's *sekentei* is unaffected by their *kokoro*. It is also arguable that, for those who feel it,

there isn't any situation where a person's *sekentei* is not active, For those who feel it, *seken* penetrates even the most intimate situations, even those moments when Ego is alone. As Muroya-san remarked: "Whether at work or with my friends, or anywhere else, that feeling is the same". Consequently, Muroya-san must feel his *sekentei* in what would be regarded as *honne* situations. Also, the fact that *sekentei* is regarded as a feeling suggests that it resides deep within the psyche. Nevertheless, many Japanese clearly do regard *sekentei* as separate from *kokoro*, and regard the suppression of *kokoro* in all but the most intimate situations as morally correct. By separating the *kokoro* from *sekentei*, Japanese have a mechanism for dealing with the pluralist moral spaces which the world of *seken* is. It is much easier to accede to ways of thinking and acting which put Ego in a moral dilemma, if his or her conscience can remain uninvolved in an inner self.

The employees at GA and the party-goers regard the suppression of the individual self as morally wrong.[18] We know this because 'suppressing the self (*kojin wo osaeru / jibun wo korosu*)' is regarded as 'deceitful (*gomakasu*)', and the expression of the self (*kosei wo dasu / jibun wo dasu*)' is regarded as 'honest (*gomakashiteinai*)'. For the interviewees, the self is not split into an inner and outer self, but is a unitary self. This self was expressed as *jibun* or *kojin*, with no reference to *sekentei* or *kokoro*, such as 'we ignore *sekentei* and reveal our *kokoro*', suggesting that the individualist self is not perceived as a conflation of the two-tiered self by the employees at GA, or by the party-goers, but is regarded as a qualitatively different unitary self which should express its *kosei*, its 'individuality', not its *kokoro*.

Having established the close link between *kokoro* and *kosei*, we know that 'to express one's 'individuality (*kosei*)' essentially means 'to express one's 'heart/soul/mind (*kokoro*)', while the established link between *kokoro* and 'true feeling (*honne*)' confirms this link. But although we can see continuity between a self which is expected 'to suppress itself' and a self which is expected 'to express itself', the continuity was not articulated by the interviewees. The self (*jibun*) was always expressed as a unitary self by all the interviewees, with no reference to an 'inner' and 'outer' self, until we started talking about *sekentei*. Consequently, in order to explain *sekentei* to me, and why they regard it as morally wrong, the interviewees referred to the 'two-tiered' model of the self. Yamazaki-san at GA adopted this approach (**4.4**), and Rika does this by contrasting the judging of a person on the basis of their *sekentei* against the judging of a person on the basis of 'what's inside':

> *Sekentei* is what a person regards as right. Your own sense of what is right. What you wear, what you do, where you go, etc. Obviously I care what I look like, but I don't feel that it is *sekentei (sekentei tte iu kanji ga nai kedo)*. It feels different, but it's difficult to explain.(*kanji wa chigau deshou demo muzukashii sekentei da yo naa*). If I'm out walking around before morning dressed like this, on my way home from a club, some people will think that it is wrong. They will think its my *sekentei*. However, I myself don't think about it. Rather than thinking about what those people are thinking, I'm more thinking about how I'm enjoying myself, what I have to do, where I have to go, etc. I'm not aware of *sekentei*. We should be judging people, not on what's on the outside, more on what is inside. *Sekentei* is what's on the outside (*soto kara mita hyōmen*), it has nothing to do with the kokoro that's inside (*kokoro to kankei nai*). Whereas in fact, what I look like is what is inside (*mita me ja nakute motto naimenteki na mono*).

[18]The suppression of the self is also regarded as inefficient and unproductive by a number of the interviewees, particularly the employees at GA (**5.1, 5.2**).

In the last sentence, after having described *sekentei* in terms of an inner and outer self, Rika contrasts this two-tiered self with herself: "Whereas in fact, what I look like is what is inside". She regards her self as undivided, a self for all occasions.

*******

### 4) Individuality Through Community, Community Through Individuality

It has become clear that there are fundamental similarities between the employees at GA and between the party-goers, in the perception of individual selves, in the perception of collective selves, and in the relationship between individual selves and collective selves. What we see happening is that the same ideas and values about individual selves and collective selves which are being implemented in companies like GA, are also developing among individual selves in established companies and in the flexible economy, so that a general trend of emerging individuality does appear to be occurring across the whole of society, as Miyanaga (1991) speculated it would.

The process of development of individualistic individual and collective selves is one of 'individuality through community', and 'community through individuality', whereby individual selves and collective selves mutually constitute each other and define each other. 'Individuality through community', is the establishment and legitimation of individualistic individual selves though membership of a collective self which encourages individual selves to express their individuality (*kosei*), while recognising and acknowledging the individuality of others. 'Community through individuality', is individual selves coming together to participate and co-operate as individual selves aware that community is dependent on all members expressing their individuality (*kosei*), and encouraging others to do likewise. Within a company like GA, this is achieved through the organisational structure and command structure of the company, and through collectively acknowledged discourses of individuality and community, which legitimate individuality and define parameters for thought and action at both the individual and collective level. I regard a process of establishing and legitimating individuality through the organisational structure and command structure of an institution, such as a company, as a 'top down' process.

Individualistic selves who work for established companies which are slow in implementing working practices and codes of conduct which would encourage employees to develop their individuality, are looking outside the workplace to establish and legitimate their individuality. The pace of change among established companies is slow, consequently there are large numbers of predominantly young (under 35) employees seeking to express their individuality and establish and legitimate their selves in this way. They are joined by the burgeoning numbers of individualistic selves working part-time, on temporary contracts, or on short fixed-term contracts in the flexible economy, who have little to identify with within the workplace. Recognition and legitimacy are difficult for individual selves to acquire and maintain in a flexible economy for this reason. Consequently, like those individualists in established companies, those working in the flexible economy are also looking to have their selves recognised and legitimated. This process of establishing and legitimating individuality is essentially 'bottom-up'.

Miyanaga (1991) noticed that individualistic individual selves unable to express their individuality in the workplace, such as those working in established 'up-down (*jõge gaisha*)"

companies, were forming 'private groups'. That is 'groups entered voluntarily on the basis of personal commitment', invariably outside the workplace (6.1). Miyanga's 'private groups' were predominantly family orientated. However, today, this trend has spread. Men and women, married and unmarried, are coming together to form small groups of like-minded people, where they can express their individuality (*kosei*). The same is true for those working in the flexible economy. These 'private groups', however, are too small and too isolated for these individual selves to be confident enough to 'be themselves' outside their own 'private groups'. Confidence to 'be yourself' comes from a feeling of rightness about the self, which for most people can only come from recognition by a number of 'significant others' that the self is 'OK'. For the employees at GA, this feeling of 'rightness' comes from working for the company itself. The company requires its staff to express their individuality, and this fact alone confers a considerable degree of legitimacy. In addition, because GA is a successful and respected company, this further legitimates the employees individuality.

In the absence of many companies like GA, many young individualistic selves are looking for a way to establish and legitimate their selves. A Techno party is one way that individual selves can achieve the same results as working for a company like GA. A Techno party is a 'private group' of a sufficient size to give those who attend the chance to try out their individuality as if in public, which gives them the confidence to 'be themselves' in other situations. This is very much a learning process, where emerging individualists are negotiating the parameters for thought and action among themselves. People come with their own social expectations, which, due to the sheer numbers of people, are thrown into relief and objectified. What I mean by this is that as individual selves interact, similarities and differences of thought and act become visible and can therefore be recognised. This impacts on the individual self through the self noticing patterns of thought and action at the collective level. On a sufficiently large scale, similarity and difference becomes objectified and consequently achieves an authority. Soon, parameters for thought and action begin to emerge. This is not a 'top down' process, such as in GA or any company or institution which imposes guidelines for thought and action through an organisational and command structure upon the individual self and the collective self. Individual selves and collective selves are established and legitimated through a 'bottom up' process at a Techno party. The process is 'bottom-up', simply because parameters for thought and action are negotiated by individual selves with no organisational structure or command structure. Coalescing individual thoughts and actions form patterns, making them recognisable, whereby they become objectified, sedimenting out of the ether as individual selves begin to articulate recognisable discourses of being-in-the-world and act within those discourses. Parameters for thought and action, articulated through these discourses, acquire an authority and a legitimacy. Nevertheless, even though these discourses of being which define how individual selves 'should' interact, do appear to be outside selves, everything is negotiated through individual selves. There is no organisational structure, no command structure, there are no tasks.

Individuality (*kosei*) is defined at the collective level at GA in exactly the same way as among the party-goers, articulated by individual selves through a discourse of individuality. However, at GA this discourse is itself defined by the organisational structure and command structure of the

company, making it a 'top-down' process. Even so, the degree of concordance at GA and at Techno parties, between the type of selves, both individual and collective, and between the discourses of individuality is striking. Not only that, but the relationship between individual selves and collective selves is virtually identical, where, in both cases, individuality is achieved by means of community, and community is achieved by means of individuality.

An important question remains to be considered: Are these 'communities' in any way constructed in opposition, antagonism, or by other relationship to other communities? In other words, are these collectivities of individualistic individual selves symbolically constructed (Cohen 1985), and are there boundaries at which these symbols are more visible or can be better understood? In the case of GA, there was a noticeable lack of symbols and rituals, compared with Japanese companies of the kind described by Rohlen (1974) and Kondo (1990). As Nakane (1970) explains, unity in companies such as these is achieved by "fostering a feeling of rivalry against other similar groups" (Nakane 1970: 10), and provides a good example of a symbolic construction of community.

I did not identify any examples of a symbolic construction of community, by means of symbols and rituals within GA. In addition, the sense of inclusiveness was reduced through a noticeable absence of references to *uchi no kaisha* (our company). I perceived a discourse of individuality among the employees, generated by Matsuda-san's personal beliefs and business philosophy. However, this was not systematized in any company songs or occasions, or in opposition to anything. There was a conscious effort by Matsuda-san to be different from companies like those described by Nakane (1970), Rohlen (1974), and Kondo (1990). Matsuda-san certainly wanted to do things differently than at Tōshiba, where he had worked previously, but these were operational matters, and not concerned with identity, the crux of a symbolic construction of community.

Among the party-goers, identity, as a 'community', also seemed unimportant, with a noticeable lack of symbols used to indicate membership. The openness which the nascent ethics of individuality among the party-goers encourages mitigates against boundaries being erected. I think it was quite evident from all that the party-goers said on the various subjects that we discussed, that there are no widespread systematicattempts at inclusiveness, and no vigilance towards maintaining boundaries. In fact, there was a noticeable absence of attention paid to defining themselves in relation to others, and a willingness to remove boundaries and bring others to parties. Feeling that a party is like *nakama*, a term to describe a circle of intimates, as many of the interviewees did, indicates the degree of openness among those who attend. A characteristic of the individualism at GA and among the party-goers was a relative absence of a consciousness of 'us' or 'them', and an absence of discourses or symbols to reinforce such a consciousness.

*******

## Conclusion

I began the chapter by arguing that the mode of membership by which an individual self is joined to a collective self which encourages and recognises individuality (*kosei*) is not regarded as 'affiliation (*shozoku*)'. This is because 'affiliation (*shozoku*)' appears to describe a particular type of membership, tying the individual self into a particular structure of relationships, to particular codes of conduct, and to particular expectations and obligations, which are absent among the employees at GA and among the party-goers. The mode of membership of collective selves within GA and at Techno parties, together with the ways of integrating (*sesshi kata*) are far more fluid and flexible, making the term 'affiliation (*shozoku*)' unsuitable. The term 'group (*shuudan*)' also proved to be unsuitable, for just like 'affiliation (*shozoku*)', 'group (*shuudan*)' implies a collective self where individual selves are required to suppress their 'selves' (*jibun/kojin*), conform to uniform standards of thought and behaviour, recognise particular codes of conduct pertaining to, for example, hierarchy, position, gender etc., and maintain rigid boundaries between other similar 'groups (*shuudan*)'.

The interviewees did consider if a party is a 'group (*shuudan*)' on the basis that 'everybody has something in common (*kyõtsuu bubun ga aru*)'. However, because everybody comes as an individual (*kojin de atsumatte*), everybody decided that a party is different. A party was also regarded as something other than a 'group (*shuudan*)' because, as Masumi decided, it was something to do with *kokoro*, (mind/body/spirit). Within a 'group (*shuudan*)', an individual self is expected to suppress *kokoro*. However, among the party-goers and among the employees at GA, *kokoro* is expressed when in a collective self, but as *kosei*, therefore the expression of *kokoro* is both that which makes a party feel like a group, because everybody 'has the same consciousness', and is also the thing which means a party cannot be a group, because *kokoro* is being expressed. In fact, expressing one's individuality (*kosei*), which requires revealing one's *kokoro*, becomes a major part of self-actualisation and socialization among the employees at GA and the party-goers. Attaching importance to expressing one's *kokoro* in Japan is nothing new, what is new is that one's *kokoro* should be expressed in all situations, not just in strictly prescribed situations, usually associated with what are referred to as *ura*, 'back room', or *uchi*, 'inside', settings by anthropologists. Consistent with the conflation of social domains which I argued in 4.5, the settings in which *kokoro* can be expressed are also being redefined, while the essence of the Japanese self remains fundamentally the same. This redefinition involves the individual self 'being itself' in all settings, anything else is regarded with suspicion and considered deceitful. This is a radical change from the 'group model of Japanese society', where the self is expected to disguise its 'true self', that is, its *kokoro* and *kosei* and present its *sekentei*.

*Ishi* (will) is redefined in exactly the same way, becoming a positive characteristic of the ideal individual self. Once again, though, this redefinition shows much continuity with previous prescriptions of the term *ishi*. For example, perseverance (*gaman*), and persistence (*gambaru*), which are manifestations of *ishi* are still regarded highly among the employees at GA and among the party-

goers. However, *ishi* becomes the means by which *kokoro* is revealed through *kosei*, which marks a fundamental change. It is the mobilisation of *ishi* in the expression of *kosei* or of *jibun*, which is the act of asserting oneself, and which Ozawa-san was referring to in 3.2 when she remarked that a person requires a lot of 'energy (*pawaa*)' to undertake anything in GA. In other words, 'being an individual' requires the expenditure of *pawaa*.

I next turned to discuss whether there are hierarchical relationships within parties, and within the collective selves of the people who go to parties. Just as at GA, individual selves are regarded as equal (*taitō/byōdō*), with judgments being made on the basis of individual acts. Judgments are subjective, and it is on the basis of such individual judgments that individual selves come together to form collective selves based on the proximity of their judgments on a range of issues, facts, beliefs, likes, dislikes, goals, etc. These collective selves comprised of individual selves whose individuality (*kosei*) approximates in a consensually acceptable way are *nakama*-like. This *nakama*-ness manifests itself as a feeling (*kankaku*), as feelings of interdependence, of cooperation, of being connected, and of being able to trust others and have confidence in them while being able to 'be yourself'. A Techno party, which is a very large collection of individual selves whose individuality and individual value judgments approximate to an extent that they all come to the parties, is *nakama*-like. It is the *nakama*-like qualities which make people feel good and want to come again. However, it is also those things which make a party unlike *nakama*, which make it possible for such a large number of individual selves to be so intimate with each other. It is the acceptance of difference and of individuality which makes such a large gathering possible, and consequently opens up the possibility and creates the setting for the recognition and legitimation of selves.

The interviewees' perception of who are *tanin* and what constitutes *tanin*-ness tells us more again about how social space is being mapped by these individual selves. The pressure to conform, together with the restrictions which 'affiliation (*shozoku*)' places on individual selves, leads individual selves who are affiliated to the same 'group (*shuudan*)', to regard individual selves who are not 'affiliated (*shozoku shiteiru*)' as *tanin*, that is, 'individual selves which Ego has nothing in common with (*kyōtsuu no nai hito*)'. There are no degrees of *tanin*-ness or *nakama*-ness within such collective selves, or among such individual selves. Proximity to Ego is defined, not by Ego but by objectively recognised 'affiliation (*shozoku*)'. Maybe it is only when we realise that individual selves in the 'group model of Japanese society', cannot choose their friends, or distance themselves from their enemies that we can begin to understand what suppressing the self actually means, and why somebody like Ozawa-san should become seriously ill simply by living in her own country.

At a techno party, *tanin* are again 'people Ego has nothing in common with', but because individual selves are judged individually, because ways of integrating (*sesshi kata*) are more flexible, because nobody is judged by affiliation, and because individual selves are attempting to be 'open-minded (*oupen ma'indu*)', which means accepting difference, somebody has to be very different to be classified as *tanin*. In fact, the only people who are classified as *tanin* are people who are not prepared to, or are unable to, express their individuality, and will not, or are unable to, let others do so. People Ego doesn't know can be regarded as 'not *tanin*', and as *nakama*, because although Ego doesn't know them personally, they are, as Yuka put it: "on the same wavelength". Takeshi made an

important distinction as well. When he told me that everybody at a party is *nakama*, and I remarked, 'What, people you don't know?', he replied: "People I don't speak to, certainly". In fact the meaning of *tanin* and of *tanin*-ness has remained much the same. What has changed is that the criteria of inclusion and exclusion have radically altered, with the criteria for inclusion broadened considerably. This is how a Techno party can be *nakama*-like and bring such a large number of people to such a level of intimacy.

As in the case of GA, all the party-goers reported that they do not have a sense of *seken* at parties, and that they are not aware of their *sekentei*. Masumi had a slight feeling of *seken*, which I regard as an awareness of those moral guidelines for thought and action which are present at parties. There may be no rules pertaining to *seken* at parties, but as at GA, there are parameters for thought and action which indicate how individual selves should act. However, these guidelines cannot be regarded as *seken nami* standards because nobody is expected to conform to uniform fixed defined standards. Instead, everybody is expected to 'be themselves (*kosei wo narubeku subete dasu*)', and is perceived as different (*minna sorezore chigau*) and comes as an individual (*kojin de atsumatte*). Ai has an awareness of *sekentei* which primarily manifests itself as dismissive behaviour, casting others as *tanin*: not on the basis of their *kosei* but by projecting her *sekentei* on to them. She is aware of this and is uncomfortable about it, for she does believe that individual selves should express their *kosei* and that this should be the basis of community. However, when she is sometimes overcome by *sekentei*, she doesn't allow others to express their *kosei*, and if they do, she doesn't recognise it and accept it, which, as Hitomi remarked, leads her to the misjudge people, and misjudge them harshly.

So, just like the employees at GA, the reason why *seken* is absent, and why the party-goers do not feel *sekentei*, is because there are diverse and fragmented reference groups among them, arising from the recognition of individuality (*kosei*). Again, just as among the employees at GA, there is a high degree of concordance between the various reference groups of the party-goers, as well. We know this because a party is perceived as *nakama*-like by those who attend the parties, for *nakama*-ness rests on contiguity of thought and act. Whether these fragmented references, as contiguous as they might be, can be regarded as *seken* is difficult to say. The simple fact that a basic ethical precept of *seken* is that individual selves should suppress their self and conform to *seken nami* standards, suggests that a collective self which embraces difference and encourages the expression of individuality cannot be *seken*. Again, one of the defining characteristics of *seken* would seem to be that all members of a given collective self are subject to the same *seken nami* standards, which enforce internal uniformity and external exclusivity. These rules do not apply within the collective selves at GA and within a Techno party, which suggests that *seken* has been 'demolished' in these situations, and that generally speaking, the legitimation of individuality (*kosei*) actually involves the demolition of *seken*. As a public domain to accompany the new individualism emerges, the example of GA and the Techno parties indicates that this will undoubtedly proceed from the delegitimation of *seken* and the 'demolition' of the structure of relationships which it enforces.

*******

# 8. Redefined Selves

Through the post WWII period (*sengo jidai*) (1945-1992), Japan developed into a 'corporate' or 'company-centred (*hõjin chuushin*)' society. That is to say, a society in which, generally speaking, a person knew themselves and was known and judged by others, primarily on the basis of membership of a company, corporation, corporate group, or task-orientated group, and was expected to give priority to their workplace relationships. Women, many of whom are not members of companies for much, if any of their lives, would most likely be known as the wives or daughters of their husbands or fathers. This relationship between an individual and their company was one whereby individuals were 'affiliated (*zoku / shozoku*)' to their companies. The 'company-centred' society had a number of highly visible characteristics. One was a noticeably high percentage of the population knowing the precise ranking of the top three or so companies in each industry sector in the country, or of at least being aware of who the top three were. Another example was Ego judging a person and deciding on the correct way to address a person s/he had not met before, through the formality of finding out which company that person works for, together with their rank in that company, and then calculating their position relative to Ego. Only then could intercourse proceed satisfactorily. In other words, either knowing the precise ranking of companies and corporations, or at least being aware of the necessity to take this into consideration when meeting or speaking to others, was a vital social skill in the 'company-centred' society. Rural communities found themselves somewhat excluded from this post-WWII 'company-centred' society, but in turn found it somewhat superfluous. These examples are part of what Nakane (1970) called a 'ranking consciousness', a sense of 'above and below (*jõge*)', which ranked individuals, groups, communities, whole cities, the regions of Japan, as well as the city over the country, and which marked the 'company-centred' society not simply as a post-WWII development, but as a society with its roots in the years of the Tokugawa Shõgunate in particular, but also prior to that in Confucianism.

Companies and corporate groups in the 'company-centred' society displayed a high degree of organisational similarity, which stressed internal homogeneity, inclusiveness, and exclusivity from similarly structured corporate groups. What this meant was that attributes, such as skills and other personal qualities which drew attention to differences between the employees, were downplayed, so that a consciousness of being known as a 'computer progammer' or an 'accountant' were prevented from developing, while a consciousness of all employees being a 'member of company *x*' was actively encouraged and propagated, through company organisational structures, by means of an ethics of uniformity, and through discourses of homogeneity and belonging.

Consequently, a member of the 'company-centred' society would be very unlikely to think of himself or herself as a 'computer programmer', and would also be thought strange if they introduced themselves as such.

Individual selves, that is employees of company *x*, would primarily be known by others, and would primarily know themselves through 'affiliation (*zoku / shozoku*)' to company *x*, as '*A* san of company *x*. This would be enough information for another member of the 'company-centred' society to at least roughly locate *A* san relative to themselves within a few exchanges, which was essential for the encounter to proceed satisfactorily. *A* san may also be known by a particular rank in company *x*, and possibly from a particular department or division if it is a large well-known company. When introducing themselves to somebody outside the 'company-centred' society, such as a foreigner, who would not be expected to necessarily recognise all the important social information contained in the answer "I work for Nippon Shokubai", or "I'm a section head with Nippon Shokubai",[1] *A* san would most likely answer with one of the following: "I'm a company worker, I'm a salaryman, I'm an office worker, I'm a shop worker, I'm a factory worker", instead of referencing themselves as a computer programmer or an accountant.

The characteristics of the 'company-centred' society extend beyond the ranking consciousness which can be traced back to the political organisation of the Tokugawa Shogunate, and before that, to Confucian cosmology. The 'company-centred' society also bears a marked resemblance to the *ie*, or Japanese household. In the post-WWII period, following changes to the rules of inheritance in the Civil Code of 1947, which divested the eldest son from inheriting everything, including the *ie*, together with industrialisation and urban migration, and the development of the nuclear family, the *ie* as both a family and enterprise unit continued its pre-WWII decline. However, in both structure and ideology, the *ie* lived on and flourished in the 'company-centred' society, continuing what was always its primary function as an enterprise or work organisation. In the post-WWII period, a 'top-down' and 'bottom-up' process resulted in companies enveloping and taking responsibility for their employees and their families, attempting, and succeeding, in fostering a loyalty among the employees and their families, who then, out of obligation and through coercion, made the company their primary concern. This process was 'top-down' through company organisational structures and discourses of inclusiveness and belonging, and 'bottom up', through union representation, seeking to improve employee's conditions.

Not all employees had this 'total' relationship with their places of work. However, these persons, primarily employees who worked predominantly in small enterprises of between one and ten employees, were still known, judged, and knew themselves, primarily on the basis of the company they worked for, or the company they subcontracted to if that was the case. Women in the 'company-centred' society were primarily known by their gender and secondarily through their relationship to a place of work, possibly directly if they were employed, or through their families or husband, depending on whether married or not. Consequently, even persons who had a much less emotional and all-embracing relationship with their workplace, were still very much a part of the

[1]Nippon Shokubai is one of the leading chemical catalyst makers in Japan, also known internationally for its superior technology.

'company-centred' society and were known and judged by those criteria. These are the primary references by which individuals are known in the 'company-centred' society, but are not the only one's. Old class mates will always know each other primarily on the basis of their school relationship, for example, mothers of young children may well know and judge each other on this basis, too, but these relationships will only be recognised among those who form these relationships. More generally, they will be known in the manner I have described.

In the 'company-centred' society, the *ie* persisted both as the organisational basis of the vast majority of companies and other institutions, and in defining personhood and interpersonal relationships. As with the *ie*, although horizontal relationships between members existed, such as those of similar age or grade (*dōkyuusei*), they did not transcend the primary relationship, which was a vertical one-to-one 'parent-child (*oyabun kobun*)', or 'senior/junior (*senpai kōhai*)', relationship, which tied all members who were affiliated to the same 'group (*shuudan*)' together in a relatively fixed pattern.

'Affiliation (*zoku/shozoku*)' itself described a particular mode of membership, tying an individual member into this particular structure of relationships, to identifiable codes of conduct, and to particular expectations and obligations. 'Affiliation' to a 'group (*shuudan*)' binds individual selves into relationships with other members, and discourages them from forming relationships with members of other 'groups'. The word 'group (*shuudan*)', although a generic term, has come to refer to this particular structure of relationships between individual selves, through secondary meanings, which also defines the personhood of those who are 'affiliated to (*shozoku suru*)' it to a considerable extent, as indicated by the moniker 'company-centred' society. In the 'company-centred' society, the primary social entity is not the individual self or the public domain, but the 'affiliated group (*shozoku shuudan*)'. An 'affiliated group (*shozoku shuudan*)' is not simply any collectivity of individual selves, it is a particular structure of relationships between a certain kind of individual self. However, in common usage, the word 'group (*shuudan*)' has come to connote this very particular collective self, constituted by a very particular individual self, due to the almost total dominance of this kind of collective self and individual self in the 'company-centred' society.

This structure of relationships is rigid and non-negotiable, dictated by the position of the individual self within the rigid hierarchy of the 'group (*shuudan*)' relative to others. Certainly the individual self has room for negotiation and manipulation of others, and is given the opportunity for self-expression, however, 'non-negotiable' refers to the severely prescribed parameters for thought and action within the 'company-centred' society, achieved by setting precise rules for thought and action at the collective level, together with the negative ethical weighting attached to the expression of individuality (*kosei*). This particular structuration of relationships, which is common to all 'groups' in the 'company-centred' society, is made exclusive and binding through rigid, precise, group-specific 'ways of integrating (*sesshi kata*)' which fosters inclusiveness and exclusivity between 'groups'. This sense of inclusiveness and exclusivity is further reinforced by instilling in members the perception that it is impossible to survive outside the 'group'. What are presented as practical difficulties are then made more difficult by an ethics which casts anything other than casual relationships with 'outsiders' as 'disloyal' and 'bad', as anything less than a high

degree of inclusiveness threatens unity and stability.

In addition to the individual selves who constitute these 'groups (*shuudan*)' regarding themselves and others primarily as members of 'groups', and primarily as members of workplace 'groups', individual selves in the 'company-centred' society are, as affiliates of their 'groups (*shuudan*)', expected to 'suppress their self (*kojin wo narubeku osaeru*)', or 'deny (lit. 'kill') their self (*jibun wo narubeku korosu*)'. It is an ethical imperative of the 'company-centred' society that individual selves should hide their individuality (*kosei*), by means of 'suppressing their self' or 'denying their self'. This act of suppression or denial is the responsibility of the individual, but the individual is aware that they are likely to 'be stripped of their self (*jibun wo magiwareru*)' or 'crushed (*jibun wo tsubusareru*)' by other members of the 'group (*shuudan*)' acting as 'the group', if they do not 'conform (*awaseru*)', or alternatively they will be forced to leave.

Conformity is achieved by the authority of *seken*, which is the moral framework of the 'company-centred' society, just as it was the moral framework of Japan when the *ie* was the primary social entity. *Seken*, which is potentially more coercive than judicial law in the 'company-centred' society, and overrides both individual rights and the public domain, is the social 'world', invariably the workplace and associated relationships, surrounding Ego and Ego's 'group', whichever 'group' that happens to be at a given time. The requirement to conform to rigid, uniform ways of thinking and doing is a defining characteristic of *seken*, as is the ethical imperative to put members of *seken* and the reputation of *seken* before all else. It is *seken* which has given us these particular characteristics of the relationships between individuals and between individuals and groups in Japan. *Seken* is comprised of all persons known and unknown to Ego, whose reputation can potentially be affected by Ego's actions in some way. *Seken* is perceived to have 'ears' and 'eyes', listening to and watching the individual self, checking that s/he conforms to uniform *seken nami* (lit. 'In line with *seken*)' standards. *Seken* is also described as having a 'mouth' to gossip about the individual self, coercing the self to conform to *seken* uniform rules. What are very precise uniform standards for thought and behaviour are set at a collective level, but they manifest themselves through individual selves watching, listening, and gossiping about each other, constantly saying, 'you have to do this here', or 'this is the done thing'. *Seken* is most commonly enforced in this way by members of the 'group (*shuudan*)' coercing each other to adhere to the relevant *seken nami* standards. Some members will be more zealous than others, but the coercive nature of *seken*, together with the spectre of chaos will usually corral the more *laisse-faire* members into pressurizing dissenters, in what is often a subtle but inexorable process of maintaining the status quo. Non-conformity manifests itself as deviance from *seken nami* (*seken banare*) and commonly impacts on others as 'strange (*hen*)' or 'distasteful (*mazui*)'. The constituency of *seken* varies depending on where the individual self happens to be, what it is doing or thinking, and who it is interacting with. But the individual will be motivated and will decide on a course of action by judging which *seken nami* conventions apply for that encounter. Consequently a knowledge of the various *seken nami* conventions which apply to a particular 'group' the individual self is 'affiliated to' at a given time, is crucial social knowledge.

Indications of the moral authority of *seken* and the way that *seken* rules are enforced are

contained in the following two popular expressions: "*Seken* is noisy, so you have to be careful (*seken ga urusai kara jichō senebanaranai*)", and: "If it wasn't for *seken* it would be OK to do as you like (*seken to iu mono ga nakereba, jichō shinaku tomo yoi no da ga*)". The coercive and intimidating nature of *seken* is expressed in the popular expression: "The gossip of *seken* is frightening (*seken no torizata ga osoroshii*)".

Conformity in the 'company-centred' society is achieved by the individual self mobilizing or 'making (*tsukuru*)' *sekentei*. *Sekentei* is the self 'adjusted (*seken ni awaseru*)' to those persons known and unknown who constitute *seken*. *Sekentei* can be thought of as a 'presentational self', a 'face', a particular way of acting and appearing which is in accordance with *seken nami* rules. *Kiku to Katana*, the Japanese translation of Benedict's *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword*, gives us a good indication of what *sekentei* is. Hasegawa translates 'for decency's sake' as, '*sekentei wo tsukurou tame ni*' (Hasegawa 1950: 192), which literally means, 'for the sake of *sekentei*'.

Conceptions of personhood and adulthood in the 'company-centred' society are also conceived and described in terms of *seken* and *sekentei*, for personhood and adulthood depend on an individual's ability to negotiate and manipulate *seken* through their *sekentei*, which requires a good knowledge of the *seken nami* conventions within the various *seken* which an individual self inhabits and moves between. The individual self is required to 'make *sekentei*' in accordance with the conventions of a given *seken* by 'matching/conforming to (*awaseru*)' the correct *seken nami* standards. Because individual selves inhabit and move between different settings, they negotiate those settings by mobilizing the conventionally recognised *sekentei* for that situation, a combination of following precisely the correct 'ways of integrating (*sesshi kata*) of the given 'group (*shuudan*)' and the correct 'way of integrating' for the specific encounter, defined primarily by the relative position of Ego and Other within the 'group'. *Seken* and *sekentei* are constantly remade with every encounter, yet remain virtually static due to the rigid 'interaction rituals (*sesshi kata*)' and 'ways of doing (*shi kata*)' of 'groups (*shuudan*)', often described as 'the company's ways (*sha fuu*)' within the workplace. This is compounded by the ethical imperative to 'suppress one's self, one's individuality (*kojin wo narubeku osaeru*)'. *Seken* is responsible for individual selves in the 'company-centred' society primarily knowing themselves as extensions of collectivities rather than as individuals, and of acting in accordance with the conventions of collectivities, rather than acting as 'individuals (*kojin de*)' expressing their 'individuality (*kosei*)'. Individuality is also the well-spring of spontaneity, of difference, and of change, and it is because of *seken* that precedent is so significant in Japan, why difference is regarded as subversive, and why change is difficult to initiate.

The perception of 'us' and 'them' in the 'company-centred' society derives from the moral framework of *seken* and the particular ethics of uniformity and exclusivity which constitute what is regarded as *seken nami* by a given 'group (*shuudan*)'. The ethics which derive from the moral framework of *seken* are also responsible for the well-recorded discourses of homogeneity and 'harmony (*wa*)' which pervade the 'company-centred' society. However, this consciousness of 'us' and 'them' is not simply 'inside (*uchi*)' and 'outside (*soto*)', even though 'us' is commonly described as *uchi* in the 'company-centred' society. Even though *uchi no* commonly refers to 'us', there is no social space described as *soto* in the 'company-centred' society. Social space 'outside' where Ego happens to

be, is mapped in other more precise ways, as the example of *seken* and the most common mapping of 'other' as *hoka* or as a proper noun demonstrates.

Similarly, 'public behaviour' in a given situation is more commonly perceived, and more accurately and precisely known by Japanese, as individual selves mobilizing *sekentei* in response to the consensually agreed *seken nami* standards of *seken* for that precise encounter. Explaining certain prescribed behaviour as *tatemae* only indicates that a situation or encounter is relatively formal. *Tatemae to suru* simply indicates adherence to a rule or principle, and does not indicate what the rule or principle is, or provide a means for understanding motivation and action. Explaining action as somewhere on a continuum with *tatemae* at one end and *honne*, translated in this case as 'true feeling', at the other, is not how individual selves in the 'company-centred' society decide how to act in a given situation. *Tatemae*, like *soto*, has been assigned meanings and a level of importance in the representation of Japanese society by anthropologists beyond those which they possess for Japanese, and brings into question the manner in which anthropologists privilege and assign meaning to particular concepts. On a very evidential level, *seken* and *sekentei* feature far more heavily in daily speech in revealing the cognitive mapping of Japanese social space, and in individual explanations of motivation and action, than either *tatemae* or *soto*, which, in the case of *soto* does not appear at all, and in the case of *tatemae* is not used to assess a situation and decide on an appropriate course of action. If members of the 'company-centred' society do interact using any mentally mapped bi-polar continua, and it is questionable to what extent they do on the evidence of the meanings which *tatemae* and *soto* have for members of the 'company-centred' society, then a continuum with *sekentei* at one end and *kokoro*, the individual's 'heart/mind/soul, at the other, should be considered, as these are the embodiment of the two aspects of the self which members of the 'company-centred' society most commonly speak of.

The individual Japanese self has been described as having an inner and outer 'self', an 'interactional self' and an 'empathetic self', a 'situational self' and as being a 'multiple self'. In the case of the individual Japanese self which inhabits the 'company-centred' society, the Japanese themselves do not think of this self as 'multiple'. Situational, certainly, as the existence of *sekentei* demonstrates, and as having at least two aspects or 'surfaces', but this situationality is a characteristic of a unitary self (*jibun* or *kojin*). Only if fixedness is a characteristic of individual selves, that is to say, only we are bound by the presupposition that the individual unitary self is fixed and unchanging, do we have to resort to the idea of 'multiple' selves to explain situationality. If we start from the position that an individual self can be unitary and situational, then we can keep the individual self intact, as it is perceived to be by Japanese people themselves.

The individual self that constitutes the 'company-centred' society is commonly regarded by those individual selves as having two aspects or 'surfaces (*men*)' rather than 'selves': an 'inside (*naimen*)', which is the realm of *kokoro*, the individual's 'heart/mind/soul', and an 'outside (*hyōmen*)', which is the realm of *sekentei* or 'face (*kao*)'. *Sekentei* is regarded as the conventional way of 'being-in-the-world' by most Japanese in the 'company-centred' society. There are those members of the 'company-centred' society who say they do not pay any regard to *sekentei*, but they are the exceptions and may in fact pay more regard to it than they care to admit. Others will certainly notice

if they pay no regard to *sekentei*. For most people, presenting *sekentei* involves the simultaneous act of suppressing *kokoro*, which is how most people in the 'company-centred' Japan go about their daily business. The correct way of acting when in a 'group (*shuudan*)' is described as 'suppressing the self (*kojin wo osaeru*)' or 'denying (lit. 'killing') the self (*jibun wo korosu*)'. Consequently on the basis of this deduction, together with the way that *jibun* is used in everyday speech, it would appear that Japanese in the 'company-centred' society regard their 'self (*jibun*)' and their *kokoro* to be, fundamentally, one and the same. On the basis that members of the 'company-centred' society are required to suppress their 'self (*jibun/kojin/kosei*)' and 'make' *sekentei* when in a 'group (*shuudan*)', and regard *kokoro* as an oasis of truth and purity, this accords with the view of most members of the 'company-centred' society that, although it is morally correct to circumscribe *kokoro* in most situations, *kokoro* is morally superior to *sekentei*. This is corroborated by the view that *sekentei* is concerned with appearance (*mie/yõshi*), and is regarded as superficial (*hyõmenteki*). Even though *seken* is the moral framework of the 'company-centred' society, the special moral status accorded *kokoro* seems to act as a powerful counterbalance to keep the inherently arthritic and suppressive tendency of *seken* in check, by breathing life and energy into society through individuals expressing their *kokoro*. This would explain both the special place that *kokoro* has in Japanese society, and why it is carefully circumscribed.

In the 'company-centred' society, like the *ie*-centred society before, the situations in which this individual self is allowed to express their *kokoro* and does not have to 'suppress their self' are strictly prescribed. Expressing *kokoro*', the 'heart/mind/soul', refers to the expression of one's 'true feelings'. This would normally only be in the presence of intimately known others, such as immediate family and friends, and typically referred to as *kazoku* (immediate family), *miuchi* or *nakama*. However, in these situations, some individuals report that they still feel their *sekentei* present. This is hardly surprising, as the self is unitary and *sekentei* and *kokoro*, can in no way be independent and separate of each other. *Sekentei* cannot remain detached and unaffected by *kokoro*, and *kokoro* can never be free of the feeling of having to act according to some convention. Even when the individual self is alone, quiet, and away from all noise and distraction, we should expect *seken* to be present, in the imagination and in the conscious and unconscious mind.

Individual Japanese selves in the 'company-centred' society regard themselves to be complete as individual selves, and compromised particularly when in a 'group (*shuudan*)' and subject to *seken* conventions. We can say this because, as a member of the 'company-centred' society, the individual self when in a 'group (*shuudan*)' is expected to 'suppress the self' or 'deny the self'. If, as some writers have suggested, the individual self was somehow incomplete or partial as an individual self, and only complete when in the company of others, then we should expect language, sensibility, and cognition to reflect this, which they do not. Even though this individual self is regarded as unitary and complete by the members of the 'company-centred' society, it is not regarded as autonomous, unlike the idealised Western individual self. This is an important difference between the Japanese concepts of individuality under discussion, and Western concepts of individuality. The belief that the individual self in Japan is complete and separate as a moral and social body, but at the same time is constituted by, and dependent upon other individual selves for

its sense of self and for its self-expression, is demonstrated in various conceptions of the relationship between individual selves and between individual selves and collective selves across time: in Medieval Japan (Ikegami 1995), in the 'company-centred' society, and in the emerging 'people-centred' Japan. All these conceptions of self indicate the importance of individual selves and collective selves in mutually constituting and defining each other, and being socially acceptable only when in an ethically defined equilibrium with each other. The relationship between *seken* and *sekentei* is just one example of this. Another example is the positive ethical valence attached to the concept 'to have a self (*jibun ga aru*)'. 'To have a self (*jibun ga aru*)' is to contribute to the collective effort, within ethically prescribed relationships with other individual selves, while at the same time maintaining an independent self. This is confirmed by the negative ethical valence attached to 'to not have a self (*jibun ga nai*)', which refers to an individual self being unable to maintain independence of thought or act when among other individual selves, particularly when in a 'group (*shuudan*). To be recognised as a 'self' requires the individual to be social, that is, to nurture and maintain relationships with other individual selves. At the same time, this concept of the self, both individual and collective, makes it quite clear that the 'company-centred' society is a society which legitimates and recognises the importance of individual selves, if not individuality (*kosei*).

The 'company-centred' society recognises the individual self, but requires it 'to suppress its self'. This is explained by the relationship between *kokoro* and *seken*, and indicates that *kokoro* is the moral individual self and that *seken* is the moral collective self in the 'company-centred' society. Indeed, it is the relationship between *kokoro* and *seken*, one of tension, negotiation, and manipulation, which is how the relationship between *jibun* and *shuudan* is lived out day-to-day. This is not a relationship of opposition and antagonism, even though *jibun* and *shuudan* in the 'company-centred' society exist in a state of constant tension, a tension which Ikegami (1995) notes has existed since the beginning of the Tokugawa Shogunate, the time when the twin goals of individual-self determination and civic duty were first articulated and brought together. Ikegami tells us that at this time, an ethics and aesthetics of personhood which advanced an ideology of individuality was brought under the control of an ethics and aesthetics of civic duty. This ideology of proud individualism was not outlawed, but contained and channelled to further the pursuit of civic duty, existing in a state of tension ever since. These seemingly conflicting ideologies and the ethics that developed from them through the Tokugawa period, form the basis of the ethics of the 'company-centred' society, and explain the apparent contradiction of the ethical precepts of *jibun ga aru* and *jibun wo korosu* in the 'company-centred' society. Rather than a contradiction, in much the same way as during the Tokugawa period, these apparently contradictory ethical precepts explain both the tension that continues to exist between the goals of individual self-determination and 'civic duty' within the 'company-centred' society, and the position of a severely circumscribed individuality within that society.

Through the latter half of the post-WWII period (*sengo jidai*), the tension between the twin goals of individual self-determination and 'civic duty' have come under increasing strain. There has been a shift in the balance between the pursuit of individual self-determination and civic duty among the members of the 'company-centred' society, away from a pursuit of civic duty towards the

pursuit of individual self-determination. This shift has been gradual, but has not been substantial until the aftermath of the Bubble. Nevertheless, even though both ethics and concepts of personhood which constitute the 'company-centred' society have been overwhelmingly dominated and determined by the ideology of civic duty rather than the ideology of individual self-determination, both present in society over the centuries, the moral framework and structure of relationships engendered by the ideology of civic duty is susceptible to being undermined by only a small shift in the balance between individual self-determination and civic duty, due to its inherent rigidity and legitimacy based on conformity to uniform ways of thinking, doing, and integrating. The authority of the moral order which underpins the 'company-centred' society, together with the structure of relationships and concepts of personhood engendered by that order, depend on uniformity and a high level of conformity to that uniformity for their legitimacy. Since the early 1970s, that conformity has slowly been eroding.

This erosion of conformity is a result of increasing numbers of individual members of the 'company-centred' society pursuing the goal of individual self-determination with more vigour than they pursue the goal of civic duty, and is a combination of a gathering disenchantment and disillusionment with the pursuit of civic duty among the population, as it is constituted in the 'company-centred' society, together with the promotion of individual choice and individual difference by the guardians of the 'company-centred' society, by encouraging the population to participate in the accumulation of capital, and particularly commodities, which with their seemingly endless diversification and reinvention, has stimulated both the pursuit of the goal of individual self-determination and the growth of difference, both of which have the potential to undermine uniformity. Promoting a diverse consumer sensibility almost certainly has contributed to the shift in the balance between individual self-determination and civic duty, but only indirectly. The moments when people *en masse* were moved to question the legitimacy and the authority of the 'company-centred' society, notably the 'oil shocks' of the early 1970s and the collapse of the Bubble in 1991, are not attributable to the promotion of the accumulation of capital and commodities directly, but to disenchantment and disillusionment among the people themselves due to feelings of betrayal and deception by the guardians of the 'company-centred' society.

The ideology of civic duty was undermined in this way by a combination of two things. First, the fundamental difference and inherent irreconcilability between the ethical base which supported the idea of civic duty in the 'company-centred' society, *seken*, and the ethical base which underpinned the idea of the nation-state of Japan, as enshrined in the concept of a civil society: equal rights for all individuals under common law, together with a strong public domain to protect those rights. These two very different moral frameworks sat uncomfortably together throughout the post-WWII period. In the end, the ideals and practices which were engendered by the notion of 'civic duty' passed down through Japanese history, were undermined by the guardians of the 'company-centred' society, that is, government, the bureaucracy, and corporations, by their demands for continued efforts 'in the national interest' when both unable and unwilling to fulfill their promises to the working population for putting civic duty first and building the 'company-centred' society. Through the 1980s, this was against a backdrop of the majority of the population, for the first time,

regarding leisure to be more important than work. In addition, signs of resistance with cases of refusals to comply with transfer orders and litigation against companies brought by their employees or their families, began to increase and began to make the news. Therefore, by the collapse of the Bubble in 1991, having constantly deferred reward on the pretext of 'national interest', but in effect, in the interests of *õyake*, the ethics of civic duty were judged to be unacceptably biased and unfair by the majority of the population, and not in their interests. Although *seken* was still the dominant moral framework in the country, this judgment by the members of the 'company-centred' society was clearly made on the basis of an ethics of equal rights for all individuals, and the perception of the existence of a public domain to protect and enforce those rights. Both moral orders were susceptible to being undermined. An ethics of individualism, whereby all members are equal under common law, and which is enshrined in the Japanese Constitution, the Civil Code of 1947, and in common law, was consistently being undermined through the post-WWII period in Japan by a barrage of ideological discourses which cast all individualism as unJapanese. Any trace of the proud self-determination which had been present through the centuries went unrecognised and was also relentlessly attacked and cast as unJapanese. The increase in the number of individuals pursuing the goal of individual self-determination with more vigour than the goal of civic duty through the 1970s and 1980s was almost exclusively framed as a colonisation of the Japanese individual self by a Western individualistic self that was gaining entry through cultural and economic exchange, rather than disillusionment with the notion of civic duty, as constituted in the 'company-centred' society. This 'individuation' (Dore 1992) was regarded negatively by being cast as unJapanese by conservative voices, who were also the dominant voices. This was the discourse of 'individualism (*kojinshugi*)' versus 'groupism (*shuudanshugi*)', which quite evidently was the big post-WWII showdown between the old adversaries: the twin goals of individual self-determination and civic duty. 'Groupism' was presented, not as the embodiment of civic duty, but as the embodiment of Japaneseness, while 'Individualism', was presented, not as the embodiment of a long Japanese tradition of proud self-determination, but as unJapanese. In fact neither 'groupism (*shuudanshugi*)' or 'individualism (*kojinshugi*)' had much to do with civic duty or individual self-determination, or indeed, very much to do with Japaneseness. They were both course manœuvres in the attempt of a nation to re-establish its own sense of self after one hundred years of uninterrupted upheaval and reinvention.

The collapse of the Bubble signalled the end of the 'company-centred' society. Of course, it has not disappeared over night, but its legitimacy was irreparably damaged by the collapse and fall-out from the Bubble. This was not solely due to the majority of the population regarding the politicians, bureaucrats and businessmen who represented the 'company-centred' society as being corrupt or self-interested, and who regarded themselves as having been abused and exploited. Indeed, the coercive nature of the 'company-centred' society, the immense concentration of power at the top, and the almost unquestioning respect for authority, would almost certainly have fought off a challenge to its legitimacy, had it been just a question of ethics. In such an event, probably very little would have changed, a fact given credence by the manner in which the custodians of *õyake* continue to resist change, even when the damage to the country as a result is considerable. What

was also required, was evidence that the system had outlived its usefulness and was no longer effective in doing what it had been designed to do, to 'catch up and overtake (*oitsuki oikosu*)' the West. This is to put it things very simply, but this is essentially the case. It has been the combination of these two eventualities occurring at the same time which has resulted in the rapid manner in which legitimacy has been conferred on the idea of the 'people-centred' society.

The development of the 'people-centred' society has been gradual, even though it seems to have appeared quite suddenly. However, this is the nature of the transfer of legitimacy. It is as if a revolution has occurred without the people setting one foot in the streets in protest. Although the level of anger and sense of betrayal has remained consistently high for the best part of a decade, the removal of the Liberal Democratic Party (*jimintō*) from power in 1993, after over forty years of uninterrupted rule, was about as close to a visible revolution as the country came. The LDP managed to claw their way back into power in 1995, but by then events and conditions had made a return to the 'company-centred' society impossible. Much like a revolution, little seems to have changed on the ground, in people's daily lives, but this is not the case. Not only has the rise in unemployment and a burgeoning flexible economy changed the social landscape, the emergence of a new individualism among the mainstream of the population, together with the legitimacy conferred on 'individuality (*kosei*)' in the aftermath of the Bubble, marks a fundamental shift, both in the balance between the twin goals of individual self-determination and civic duty in Japan, but also in the meaning of civic duty itself. The individualism that is emerging is identifiably a Japanese individualism with a long history, not by any means predominantly a colonising 'Western' individualism. Certainly, it is unlikely to be completely devoid of any traces of 'individuation' (Dore 1992) engendered and conveyed by capitalist modes of production and consumption, and by the ideologies and discourses of universal human rights, which derive significantly from 'Western' concepts of individualism. Indeed, it is predominantly the changing conditions of global capitalism, which has given the impetus to the need to 'retool' the minds of the Japanese people, which together with the disgracing of *ōyake*, has swung the ethical pendulum in favour of expressing individuality rather than suppressing it. However, individualism and individuality are not solely products of Christianity or capitalism, and although both of these may engender and promote individuation, they did not give rise to the individualism which is emerging in post-Bubble Japan. This individualism is recognisably grounded in ethics and concepts of personhood present in the 'company-centred' society, and traceable as far back as the Kamakura period at least (1185-1333).

The meaning of civic duty is likely to change more fundamentally because the moral order that underpinned civic duty in the 'company-centred' society, *seken*, is both inflexible and unreceptive to change, and is irreconcilable with a moral order which engenders, legitimates, and promotes equality of individual selves, individual self-expression, difference, and a strong public domain. The drive for uniformity of thought and act which characterises *seken*, together with the primary ethic of the requirement to put *seken* before all else, suggests that there is little likelihood of *seken* existing in some modified form, and now that legitimacy has been conferred on 'individuality (*kosei*)', this is being shown to be the case. Rather than being modified, it seems as though *seken* is being replaced by an ethics of individualism, but one which stresses community rather than 'civic

duty (*giмu*)'. The Japanese individualism that is emerging in the aftermath of the Bubble contains within it a strong element of civic responsibility, and one which does not look like *seken* very much at all. Part of the ideological campaign waged against individualism through the post-WWII period, was the argument that individualism was not only unJapanese, but that it entailed automatic social chaos. This is being shown to be fallacious. A new community is emerging along with the new individualism, and although this is being accompanied by a degree of social chaos, this is not a condition of the new individualism, but a condition of the changeover from a 'company-centred' society to a 'people-centred' society. Community remains very important in the 'people-centred' society.

The primary category of person in the 'company-centred' society is the 'affiliated group (*shozoku shuudan*)', rather than the individual self and the public domain. However, the primary category of person in the 'people-centred' society is the individual self. There has been little mention of the public domain in discussions of the 'people-centred' society so far, but as the new individualism becomes established, and as the dominance of the 'affiliated group' and of *seken* subsides, so a stronger sense of a public domain will emerge, supported by legislation. The change from a 'company-centred' society to a 'people-centred' society is not a *volte face* by any means. Just as the individual self in the 'company-centred' society was valued and had its place, so does the collective self have its place and its value in the 'people-centred' Japan. However, as far as these things are quantifiable, the value of community in the 'people-centred' Japan is higher than the value of 'individuality (*kosei*)' in the 'company-centred' Japan. This is borne out by the constant references by individualistic individual selves to the importance of other individual selves in facilitating the expression of individuality (*kosei*). This is corroborated by the general feeling in the country that the growth of 'private groups' and of people openly expressing their individuality (*kosei wo dasu*) in the 1990s, is not regarded as a colonisation or a deterioration by the majority, but as a necessary adjustment to bring the balance between individual and community, in the form of the twin goals of individual self-determination and civic duty, *back* into a more harmonious equilibrium.

Whereas a primary code of conduct in the 'company-centred' society was the requirement that individual selves should 'suppress their self (*kojin wo narubeku osaeru*)' or 'deny (lit. 'kill') their self (*jibun wo narubeku korosu*)', a primary code of conduct in the 'people-centred' society is the requirement that individual selves should 'express their self (*kosei wo narubeku dasu/jibun wo narubeku dasu/kojin wo narubeku dasu*)'. This code of conduct is then ethically weighted by prescribing the suppressing of one's 'individuality (*kosei*)', or the suppressing of one's 'self (*jibun/kojin*)', as 'deceitful (*gomakasu*)', and 'the expression of one's self (*jibun wo dasu*)' as 'honest (*gomakashiteinai*)'. This fundamental difference in the kind of individual self that constitutes the 'people-centred' society engenders all kinds of other differences between the 'company-centred' society and the 'people-centred' society, although the importance of community and the manner in which individual selves and collective selves define and mutually constitute each other remains much the same. The requirement 'to express one's individuality' is accompanied by the requirement to allow others to do likewise, and not only allow them to do so, but to encourage them to do so and to support them in that endeavor. This requires a concomitant acceptance of difference within the

collectivity, which immediately casts the ethics of uniformity which derive from *seken* and which prescribe individual action in a 'group (*shuudan*)' in the 'company-centred' society, as problematic. The emphasis on encouraging and supporting other individual selves is evident in the importance attached to 'participation (*sanka*)' and 'co-operation (*kyōryoku*)' in the nascent discourses of individualism that are emerging. This emphasis on participation and co-operation, and on the importance of community in generating individualism and maintaining it, is one of the characteristics of the new individualism. The individual selves who constitute the 'people-centred' society regard themselves as individuals who are morally obliged to express their 'individuality (*kosei*)', but in a mutually reinforcing relationship with other individual selves expressing their 'individuality'. Therefore, it is understood that a person is only able to express their 'individuality' if there are others to be individual with. 'Individuality' in the 'people-centred' society is therefore perceived to only be possible through community. This marks out the new individualism emerging in post-Bubble Japan as an individualism different from 'Western' concepts of individualism, which stress individual autonomy and sovereignty. Autonomy and individual sovereignty are important aspects of the new individualism in Japan, but they are perceived as only achievable through community, and not at the expense of community. The discourses of individuality emerging in post-Bubble Japan stress 'participation (*sanka*)' and 'co-operation (*kyōryoku*)' far more than discourses of Western individuality.[2] What is regarded as morally correct: that people should actively participate as individuals by expressing their individuality and encouraging others to do likewise, is re-inforced by the belief that the expression of individuality is only possible through the participation and co-operation of others.

The individual self which constitutes the 'people-centred' society is also recognisably Japanese, rather than 'Western', because it is clearly related to the individual self that constitutes the 'company-centred' society, and to concepts of personhood that extend further back in time. In the 'company-centred' society, *kokoro* (heart/mind/soul) and *jibun* (self), are essentially the same, although not used interchangeably. We know this, not least because, when this individual self is in a 'group (*shuudan*)', it is required to 'conform (*shuudan ni awaseru*)', which is described as 'suppressing' *jibun* and 'making' *sekentei*. 'Making *sekentei*', which is *tatemae* behaviour, requires the 'suppressing' of *kokoro*, consequently *jibun* and *kokoro* appear to be different cognitive connotations of the 'true self'. Individual selves who constitute the 'people-centred' society report that they are expected to 'express' or 'reveal' their *jibun* and do not feel they have to 'make' *sekentei*. In addition, they report that they are able to, and are expected to 'do the things they think are right (*jibun no tadashii to omou koto*)', which is the same as 'expressing *kokoro* (true feeling or intention)'.

Although *kokoro* is the repository of the 'true feeling and intention' of the individual self in the 'company-centred' society and the 'people-centred' society, the individual selves who constitute the 'people-centred' Japan whom I have spoken to, do not say that an ethical imperative of the 'people-centred' society is that individual selves should 'express their *kokoro* (*kokoro wo narubeku*

[2]Ikegami points out that, although discourses of Western individualism stress individual autonomy and sovereignty, the experience of individual selves indicates that: "on a simple yet very profound level, our...true identity cannot be separated from our social relationships. Intuitively we recognise that we 'experience' happiness when we are properly connected to others and valued by them. At the same time, we search - sometimes at great emotional cost - for the grail of the 'true self" (1995: 372).

*dasu*)'. Although 'to express *jibun*' means to express one's 'true' self, there is something about *kokoro* which suggests that 'to express one's self' does not mean 'to express one's *kokoro*. However, I contend that they are fundamentally the same, only there are other meanings contained in the idea of *kokoro* which render its usage in this way problematic. Of course, it has also become convention not to think of *kokoro* in this way. Once again, this appears to be due to a perception of *kokoro* in the 'people-centred' society which has carried over from the 'company-centered' society. Lebra (1992) makes a point that *kokoro* is 'asocial' and does not in fact interact with other selves directly at all, but remains 'uncontaminated' as the repository of truthfulness and purity within the individual self. In other words, it remains untouched by social interaction and by social convention. This sense of *kokoro* as somehow 'beyond society' is reinforced by, if not a result of, the manner in which the expression of *kokoro* is severely circumscribed by the ethics which derive from the moral framework of the 'company-centred' society. In the 'company-centred' society, even in those intimate situations when *kokoro* is allowed to be expressed, conventions still apply and are felt by many people. Consequently, *kokoro* is perceived to exist almost in a state of grace beyond expression. This perception of *kokoro* appears to have carried over into the 'people-centred' society, further indicating that the new individualism is grounded in Japan's past.

The individual self which constitutes the 'company-centred' society is perceived as having two 'surfaces': an 'inside (*naimen*)', the realm of *kokoro*, and an 'outside (*hyõmen*)', the realm of *sekentei*. No such partitioning characterises the individual self which constitutes the 'people-centred' society. Neither does this individual self describe itself in terms of *kokoro* and *sekentei* in any sense, judging on the basis of those whom I spoke to. 'What is seen from the outside is what is inside' was the closest these unpartitioned unitary selves came to describing themselves in terms of *kokoro* and *sekentei*. And only once was the 'expression of *kokoro*' mentioned as a characteristic of these individual selves, and then only tentatively. I only heard these individualistic individual selves describing themselves using the terms, *jibun, kojin* and *kosei*.

The meaning of *kosei* in both the 'company-centred' society and the 'people-centred' society is also very much the same, except, like *jibun*, the ethical valence on the expressing of *kosei* has been reversed. In addition, the relationship between *kosei, jibun* and *kokoro* in the 'people-centred' society is also seemingly unchanged from their relationship in the 'company-centred' society. Nevertheless, even though *kosei* is clearly related to *kokoro* in the 'people-centred' society as it is in the 'company-centred' society, differences exist, once again stemming from the perception of *kokoro* in both the 'company-centred' society and the 'people-centred' society outlined above. *Kosei* is not asocial by any means, and does not remain untouched by social interaction. In fact, even though *kosei* is the essence of the individual self, it is not wholly subjective, but intersubjective. In a manner very similar to that described by Ikegami (1995) in her explanation of the expression of honourific individualism in Medieval Japan, the 'sense of self' of an individual self in the 'people-centred' society is 'heightened' by their more subjective sense of self coming into 'proximity' with their intersubjective sense of self. This heightened 'sense of self' is *kosei. Sekentei* is also a 'sense of self' (rather than 'a self') which is heightened by an intersubjective and subjective sense of self coming into proximity. But this similarity, and the fact that *kosei* is situational and intersubjective, does not mean that *kosei* is much

the same as *sekentei*. To begin with, Japanese themselves regard *kosei* and *sekentei* as fundamentally different: *kosei* is one's individuality, the manifestation of one's 'true self', *sekentei* is a 'face' to conform to fixed, defined standards (*shuudan ni awaseru / seken ni awaseru*). Secondly, even though *kosei* is modulated by situation and encounter, the fact that social and moral space in the 'people-centred' society is unitary, means that the individual self is consequently expected to *consistently* express or reveal their 'self (*jibun*)' in all situations and in all encounters in that unitary moral and social space, by expressing their *kosei*. This is in marked contrast to *sekentei*, where the multiple social and moral spaces of the 'affiliated groups (*shozoku shuudan*)' and various *seken* which constitute the 'company-centred' society, require that the individual self, rather than being consistent in all situations and encounters, should instead conform to the conventions and ethical imperatives of the particular 'affiliated group' or *seken* the individual self is in at any given time, by making the appropriate *sekentei*.

This important difference between an intersubjective and situational *kosei*, and *sekentei*, is further confirmed by the fact that the moral and social space in which individual action takes place in the 'people-centred' society is perceived and mapped as a unitary space. This is understood for two main reasons: First, because the individual selves who inhabit this space regard it as unitary, and second, because of the emergence of a nascent 'universal ethics' which apply within that space, rather than a 'particularistic group utilitarianism' (Bellah 1985) which characterises the 'company-centred' society. Just as the mapping of social space in the 'company-centred' society is consistent with the partitioning of the individual self into the realms of *kokoro* and *sekentei*, so the mapping of social space in the 'people-centred' society is consistent with a self which perceives itself as unitary and unpartitioned. Social space in the 'people-centred' society is mapped as a single domain, inhabited by unitary, unpartitioned individual selves, who are expected to *consistently* and *reliably* (*shinrai dekiru*) 'be themselves (*jibun wo narubeku dasu / jibun no tadashii to omou koto wo narubeku dasu*)'. This contiguity between personhood and the mapping of social space is to be expected, just as we should also expect the moral framework, and the ethics which derive from it, to define and legitimate this concept of personhood and this mapping of social space.

The question of the intersubjectivity and situationality of this unitary and unpartitioned individual self brings me to the relationships between individual selves in the 'people-centred' society, and to the nature of community. It is the legitimation of individuality (*kosei*), and the sanctioning of difference, engendered by the fundamental ethical imperatives, 'to reveal one's self' and to allow and encourage others to do likewise, which radically alters the relationships between individual selves, and between individual selves and collective selves in the 'people-centred' society. The basic requirement that all individual selves, regardless of age, sex, or position within an organisation, such as a company, should 'express or reveal their selves (*jibun wo narubeku osaeru*)' and should allow and encourage others to do likewise, renders all individual selves 'equal (*taitō / byōdō*)', as all individual selves are subject to these basic conventions of action and interaction. Individual selves engage with each other as equals, not on the basis of 'affiliation to groups (*shuudan ni zoku suru*)' or on the basis of position, age, or sex. However, this does not mean that value judgments are not made and that individuals are treated similarly. It is this fact that all individual

selves are empowered to make subjective judgments and act on them that renders all individual selves 'equal (*taitō / byōdō*)'. The notion of *kejime* (distinction), and of making value judgments (*kejime ga aru*) against standards of 'good' and 'bad', 'right' and 'wrong', 'ugly' and 'beautiful' remains undiminished.

The primary category of person in the 'people-centred' society is the individual self, not the 'affiliated group'. Therefore, the loci of responsibility for passing judgment and for decision making, shifts from the 'affiliated group' to the individual self. This means that the authority to make judgments, and to make decisions, shifts from the level of the 'affiliated group' to the individual self, further encouraging the expression of individuality (*kosei*) and initiative (*shuchō*). This results in a fragmentation and diversification of references and value judgments, which is confirmed by individual selves reporting an absence of any *seken nami* conventions within such a collective self, and having no sense of having to 'make' *sekentei*. This 'equality', unlike *seken*, brings morality, concepts of personhood, and the mapping of social space, into line with common law, and the juridical imperative that everyone *should* be treated the same under the law.

The legitimating of the expression of individuality (*kosei*), leads to a diversification of 'ways of thinking (*kangae kata*)' and 'ways of doing (*shi kata*)', and prompts a loosening-up of the ways individual selves integrate (*sesshi kata*). Individual selves in the 'people-centred' society are not bound by the rigid, precise 'ways of integrating (*sesshi kata*)' which characterise the 'company-centred' society. In the 'people-centred' society, the 'ways of integrating (*sesshi kata*)' are far more flexible, in order to accommodate individual expression and subjective judgment which results from the legitimation of 'individuality (*kosei*)'. This loosening-up of 'ways of integrating' renders the term 'affiliation (*shozoku / zoku suru*)' unsuitable to describe the modes of membership of individual selves to collective selves which privilege the individual self and require individual selves to 'express their self'. This is because the term 'affiliation' connotes rigid, precise, binding, 'ways of integrating'. The term *shuudan* is also rendered problematic to describe collective selves in the people-centred society, as it too connotes the kind of internally inclusive, rigidly hierarchical, 'affiliated group (*shozoku shuudan*)' which is the primary category of person in the 'company-centred' society. It remains to be seen whether the term *shuudan* will lose its association with 'affiliated group' and become a generic term for collective selves in the 'people-centred' society, or whether another word, such as *dantai*, which also refers to a collectivity of individual selves, but with less of a connotation of 'affiliated group' than *shuudan*, will become the common term for a collective self in the 'people-centred' society.

With the individual self as the primary category of person in the 'people-centred' society, the topography of community also changes. Instead of a series of particularistic regulated social spaces, all of them morally distinct, which bind individual selves into rigid, hierarchical 'affiliated groups', in opposition to other 'affiliated groups', individual selves are able to form and move between 'private groups', which they enter voluntarily, on the basis of personal commitment. All members of these communities are 'equal (*taitō / byōdō*)', and are required to express their 'individuality (*kosei wo narubeku dasu*)'. The legitimacy of these 'private groups', together with the contiguity of thought and act which exists between these individual selves who come together on the basis of personal

commitment, as equals, provides a basis for them to orientate themselves within the wider community and within the public domain, and acts as a springboard for their contribution to the wider society. Flexible *sesshi kata* allow for individual selves who have never met before to forge relationships, to be adventurous, and to broaden their experience and their understanding. The shift to the individual self as the primary social entity has freed the individual from the threat of rejection by the 'group' as the ultimate sanction, by being cast into the void. By not being 'affiliated to groups (*shuudan ni zoku suru*)', and by being empowered to act individually and subjectively, individual selves are freed from a coercive and constraining society, to participate as equals, and to contribute their own unique qualities. The potential for initiative and creativity present within every individual is unleashed by the legitimating of individuality and difference, and it is this as much as a changing moral climate which has driven the pragmatists in the 'company-centred' society to embrace change and the idea of a 'people-centred' society.

*******

Personhood and cosmology, and as a result, personhood and ethics, are inextricably linked. It has been by means of a 'topographical triangulation' of the self, an assessment of personhood, ethics, and the mapping of social space, that I have attempted to trace and define the individualism that is emerging in post-Bubble Japan. I have argued that this individualism is an identifiably Japanese individualism, displaying continuity with Japan's past. I have attempted to show that the individualism emerging in post-Bubble Japan is grounded in Shintõ, Buddhist, and Confucian concepts of personhood, being part of a tradition of 'proud self-determination' or 'honourific individualism', which characterised the samurai of the Medieval, Tokugawa, and early Meiji periods. Dumont (1985) tells us that the roots of modern Western individualism derive from the fact that, in the Christian tradition, 'man exists as an individual in relation to God'. In Shintõ, Buddhist, Confucian, and Neo-Confucian cosmology, individuals are not, individually, in a private 'outworldly' (Dumont 1985) relationship with one god, but in relation to other individuals, other creatures, plants, and the earth and sky itself. The interdependence of individual selves in determining their mutual fate is more evident in the Japanese tradition than it is in the Western tradition, where an understanding of individualism is not based on a perception of the mutual interdependency of individual selves, and it is this recognition of mutual interdependency which characterises the new individualism emerging in the aftermath of the Bubble, and differentiates it from Western theories of individualism.

These concepts of personhood are evident among the employees at GA and among the party-goers. Among the party-goers, there is a noticeable sense of cause-and-effect, and of moral causation through the interdependence of persons. Individual selves among the party goers understand very well the causality that flows from their own individuality. This is why participation and cooperation are regarded as key elements in the engendering and maintenance and reproduction of individuality (*kosei*), and through that, the maintenance and reproduction of community. Carrithers (1985) notes that what is regarded as 'skillful' in Buddhist thought, is also a

morally correct act. This is evident among both the employees at GA and the party-goers. In the Buddhist scheme of things, 'skill' itself is the power of reasoning to discern what is right for the individual self, and, due to the belief in moral causation, what is right for others. Among the party goers in particular, the number of references to the individual self facilitating its own attainment of peace and well-being, in other words, facilitating the expression of its individuality (*kosei*), by facilitating others in attaining such a state, are considerable and more than I have noted in Britain or in other countries in which Christian/Hellenistic concepts of personhood prevail. This emphasis on individuality through community, and community through individuality is not something which has characterised discourses of individualism in Britain or the United States, for example, but *is* something which characterises the individualism emerging in Japan.

I have not charted the development of the new individualism in post-Bubble Japan from its early beginnings, in the manner of Dumont, as this is beyond the scope of this study. Dumont's categories of 'outworldly' and 'inworldly' individualism are powerful tools for understanding the development of modern Western individualism, rather than individualism *per se*. A transition from an 'outworldly' individualism to an 'inworldly' individualism can be roughly discerned in the Japanese case, but rationalisation and secularization are the processes by which individualism has turned 'inworldly' in Japan. In Japan we see a similar tradition of 'outworldly' individualistic teachers and travellers throughout Japanese history, what Dumont refers to as 'the wise man detached from the world'. This is particularly true of the Buddhist tradition. But after this point, Dumont's model breaks down. In the Japanese case, and apparent in Shintō and Buddhist cosmology in particular, the 'outworld' and the 'inworld' are not separated in the same way as in Christian cosmology. Other (superficial?) similarities also exist, which tempt the analyst into using Dumont's model to reveal the course of Japanese individualism over time. In the early Christian tradition, the marriage of Hellenistic Natural Law and Christian morality by the early Christian teachers is reminiscent of the joining of Confucian priciples for secular purposes and Buddhist strictures for religious purposes, to form the basis of a natural law of the universe and humankind's place in it. Just as the 'outworldly' individual seeking either salvation (Christian), knowledge (Hellenistic), Truth (Vedic), or Enlightenment/Negation (Buddhist), is a common feature of human societies in cosmological, moral, and social terms, so the linking of secular philosophy and religious morality is also something which is not uncommon. These points aside, Dumont's model cannot describe the Japanese case. Which, rather than leading to the conclusion that individualism has not developed independently in Japan, suggests that there are more ways than one for a modern individualism to develop.

Although the individuality emerging in post-Bubble Japan is identifiably a Japanese individualism, capitalism, and arguably more importantly, concepts of personhood associated with Universal Human Rights, have played their part. However, the existence of an individuality in Japan for over fifteen hundred years at least, demonstrates that individualism *per se* is not a product of capitalism, or, as Bellah (1985) first argued, is not a condition of its appearance or development either. Capitalism does seem to have encouraged what Dore (1991) terms 'individuation' in a number of ways, but this individuation is also clearly a product of technological development and

creeping rationalisation and secularization, all of which cannot unproblematically be cast as resulting from capitalist modes of production. That well-spring of capitalism, the creation of desire, and corresponding consumer trends towards increased product diversity and 'individuality', may have encouraged individualism, but it has not created it in Japan.

Capitalism at the end of the 20th Century A.D., however, has its own 'cultural logic' (Harvey 1989, 1990; Jameson 1991). Manifestations of this 'cultural logic' are very evident in Japan, particularly among those persons who have been freed from the constraints of the cultural logic of the 'company-centred' society. In Japan, this is nowhere more evident than in the spaces of the flexible economy, and particularly among those members of the underground dance music movement. The underground dance music movement, not only in Japan, is the first manifestation of an 'information-age culture'. This movement is late twentieth century, post-postmodern culture, flourishing in post-Bubble Japanese society. As a product of these times, it attempts, and for the first time successfully manages, to bring together ideals which have been some of the major goals of industrial societies for the second half of this century, but have continually been undermined by the reproduction and spread of mainly Christian nineteenth century ideas about gender, race, and nation, through conduits accompanying capitalist economic expansion from Europe and the United States.[3] The main reason why this cultural logic has been able to thrive and develop in situations often dominated by other values, is due to the opportunities which have become available in the spaces opened up in advanced industrial nations by the stalling of the global economy, together with the high level of wealth and education within those societies. This level of affluence and education allows people to survive and thrive within the spaces when previously they could not. This has been further aided by to the widespread availability of relatively cheap information and digital technology as a means of communication, which allows these people to communicate quickly and efficiently, to feel empowered individually and to feel part of something much larger.

It is because the culture is generated and currently primarily exists within the spaces opened up by flexible economies, that the dance music movement is regarded as 'underground', when it is in fact extremely large with a high profile, with many people who do not directly associate with the culture holding many of its values.[4] It is the first truly international culture, in that it is produced and consumed in no one place, and cannot be identified in terms of national boundaries. What has up to now only been an ideal, possible only as way of imagining the world, is now a possible reality, and is a lived reality for an increasing number of people. This is the first cultural movement which effaces and then reinstates differences of race, culture, and gender, as equal and with mutual respect. Again, what has largely been an ideal is now a lived reality for more and more people. It is the cultural movement to have realised the most complete synthesis so far of human beings, machines, and the natural (physical) world, in that it does not prioritize or exclude any of these, instead searching for a balance between the three. What drives all these attempts to efface differences and re-evaluate priorities is the increasing awareness of the fragility and

[3]While Christian values have been spread all over the globe through capitalist economic expansion, in local situations the dominant values supported by the capitalist economy also continually seek to undermine any attempts to reform them.

[4]The reverse no doubt also holds true.

interdependence of systems, and a mistrust of traditional scientific and rationalistic hegemony. This cultural movement seeks to integrate science back into human experience. It does not seek to exclude capitalist economic values either, but seeks to bring them into a balance with other values. This is something which is already happening. None of what I have mentioned should be unfamiliar. In short, this cultural movement is the first sign of a successful synthesis of many of the ideas and values which, within modern industrial societies, are cast as our responsibilities for the future.

Capitalism, as well as rational scientific method, has brought us to this point in an evolving consciousness. On the threshold of a new millennium, a sense of individuals *having* to take responsibility for their actions, because we are confronted with facts that strongly indicate that each of us, individually, can influence not only those in our village any more, but those in villages on the other side of the world, is growing rapidly. This 'knowing' results from human beings, particularly those in advanced industrial societies, arriving (again?) at a point where they are confronted by the reality of causation and the interdependency and fragility of systems. Capitalism has brought those of us in advanced industrial societies to a point where we are increasingly confronted with global responsibilities, cast as moral responsibilities at a personal level. In this sense, late-20th Century capitalism is, in its various locations, engendering a global personhood that is an individualism, on the basis of Dumont's description: "Where the individual is a paramount value, I speak of individualism" (Dumont 1985: 94). Individuality (*kosei*) among all the employees at GA, and among all the party-goers, was infused to varying degrees with the morality of this global consciousness I have described above. Some with considerable eloquence, others only able to articulate inarticulately, but in all cases with consistency and varying degrees of urgency. Therefore, I conclude that the new individualism in Japan is a Japanese individualism that developed independently of Western individualism, but that the new individualism in Japan also bears the characteristics of an emerging global sense of personhood, and one that should not be regarded as 'Western', but as 'global'. Capitalism would certainly seem to be intrumental in this global sense of personhood, but drawing out individualism in a particular location rather than introducing it.

*******

The sky is a metal blue. It is sharp and metallic. Shimmering in an early Spring sun above the buzz of traffic and the sounds of the street. I am filled with a sense of possibilities when I look at this sky, as if a jet was streaking across it, when I would first, momentarily, wonder where it was going, then imagine the lives of the people on the plane, ordinary, sometimes filled with joy, sometimes with pain, maybe looking down and wondering the same things. Yet even though I am filled with a sense of the unknown, this sky is Tokyo for me as much as anything else. The colour, ranging from a very particular irridescent metallic blue at the zenith, through to a pale pearlescent shimmering haze at the skyline. Sometimes there is a hint of orange and purple at the base, which can be staggeringly beautiful at dusk. It is the pall of traffic fumes and noise, but no less beautiful or evocative. The air still with a nip in the mornings, but with the faintest heat of that early Spring sun.

The sky is too much. I can't contain and organise the feelings it fills me with now and triggers from before. I search for ways to comprehend it, to make sense of it, to describe it and explain it to you. If I imagine what it would sound like if I hit this Tokyo sky, it would sound as if I had just hit an empty 40 gallon oil drum with a piece of timber. A complex sound, discordant, surprisingly short with little ring. Then afterwards I would hear other sounds which I had not at first heard. The complexity of the sound would multiply and reverberate through my consciousness, piling on layers of barely understood meaning, rather than achieving the opposite. But richer for that. It would be the sound of an old discarded piece of wood on a grubby old forgotten 40 gallon oil drum, but that description still leaves me almost frantic, only compounding the sensation of the sky, hardly explaining it. The drum would also be discarded, first used for lube oil. Green and larger than life when delivered new, white stenciled letters sprayed fleetingly on the side, but already with smudges of grease. Then probably used again and again for old sump oil, now dented and forgotten, discarded, maybe somewhere under this brilliant blue Tokyo Spring sky.

I'm looking at the Tokyo sky from a footbridge outside Ueno Station, on the 3rd April 1995. It could have been described in many ways. Indeed it undoubtedly was, and can still be described in many ways because I'm looking at a video of this sky on the 18th March 1998, nearly three years after it has passed into night over a thousand times. I went to Ueno to visit Ameyokochō in Tokyo on that early April day in 1995. I had been going around with the camera since New Year, trying to capture on film the images and sounds of Tokyo which had sedimented in my consciousness and unconsciousness in the time I had been there. A kaleidoscope of images, sounds, smells, sensations, emotions, tastes, touches, voices. I did not intend to use the film like this, but now, as I search for a way to bring my discussions to a satisfactory conclusion, to reintegrate them into existence, I have gone looking for the film of Ameyokochō and Ueno. Will I be able to see a 'company-centred' society' here? Will I be able to see a 'people-centred' society here? Will there be Redefined Selves walking around Ameyokochō? After nearly six years of studying these selves, am I able to recognise them in the street? Will you be able to recognise them on the basis of my explanations? I have watched the video three or four times now. The first image is Ueno Station from a footbridge on a brilliant Spring morning...

*******

## Bibliography
## (List of References cited)


Abe, Kinya. 1994. 'Nihon ni seiōgata shakai wa sonzai suruka [Does a European style society exist in Japan?]' in Abe Kinya (ed)*Ima 'Yuuroppa' ga hōkai suru '[Now 'Europe' Will Disintegrate]*. Tokyo. Kōbunsha

Abe, Kinya. 1995. *Sekentei to wa nani ka [What is Sekentei?]* Tokyo. Kōdansha

Abegglen, James. C. 1958. *The Japanese Factory: Aspects of its Social Organisation* MIT

Aida, Yuji. 1972. *Nihonjin no Ishiki Kōzō [The Structure of the Japanese Consciousness]*. Tokyo. Kōdansha

Aoki, M. (ed) 1984. *The Economic Analysis of the Japanese Firm* New Holland

Arai, Shinya. 1992. 'Radical Reform for a Company-centred Society'. Japan Echo. Vol.XIX. No.4. Translated from 'Saraba, hōjin yuuguu shakai'. Chuo Kouron. October 1992

Asahi Shinbun. 12/02/95.

Austin, Lewis. Ed. 1976. *The Paradox of Progress* New Haven. Yale UP

Bachnik, Jane. 1986. 'Time, Space and Person In Japanese Relationships' in Hendry, J and Webber, J. (eds). 1986.*Interpreting Japanese Society*. JASO. Oxford

Bachnik, Jane. 1992. 'Kejime: defining a shifting self in multiple organisational modes' in *Japanese Sense of Self* Rosenburger, N. (ed). 1992. Cambridge. CUP

Bachnik, Jane. 1994. 'Introduction: *Uchi/Soto*: Challenging our Conceptualisations of Self, Social Order and Language' in Bachnik, J. and Quinn, C.J. (ed) 1994. *Situated Meaning: Inside and Outside in Japanese Self, Society and language*. Princeton. PUP

Bachnik, J. and Quinn, C.J. (eds). 1994. *Situated Meaning: Inside and Outside in Japanese Self, Society and language* Princeton. PUP

Barth, F. 1969. *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social Organisation of Culture Difference* London. Allen and Unwin

Basham, R. 1978. *Urban Anthropology: The Cross-Cultural Study of Complex Societies* Mayfield. Palo Alto

Bateson, Gergory. 1958 (1936) *Naven: A Survey of the Problems Suggested by a Composite Picture of the Culture of a New Guinea Tribe Drawn From Three Points of View* Stanford. Standford UP

Beasley, G.W. 1990. *The Rise of Modern Japan*. London. Weidenfeld and Nicolson

Befu, H. 1971. *Japan: An Anthropological Introduction* . Tokyo. Tuttle

Befu, H. 1980a. 'The Group Model of Japanese Society and an Alternative' Rice University Studies. Vol. 66, No. 1.

Befu, H. 1980b. 'Alternative Models: The Next Step' Social Analysis. No. 5/6.

Befu,H. 1990. 'Four Models of Japanese Society and their Relevance to Conflict', in Eisenstadt, S. and Ben-Ari, E (eds). 1990. *Japanese Models of Conflict Resolution* London. Kegan Paul International

Bellah, Robert. 1985. *Tokugawa religion: The Cultural Roots of Modern Japan* London. Free Press

Benedict, Ruth. 1967 (1946). *The Chrysanthemum and The Sword* London. Routledge & Kegan Paul

Bloomberg Financial On-Line News 16/4/1998.

Bourdieu, P. 1984. *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* New York. Routledge and Kegan Paul

Chernoff, John Miller. 1979. *African Rhythm and African Sensibility: Aesthetics and Social Action in African Musical Idioms* Chicago. Chicago UP

Clark, Rodney. 1979. *The Japanese Company*. London. Yale

Cohen, Anthony, P. 1985. *The Symbolic Construction of Community* Ellis Howard. Chichester

Cohen, Anthony, P. 1994. *Self Consciousness: An Alternative Anthropology of Identity* London. Routledge

Cohen, Anthony, P. and Rapport, Nigel (eds). 1995. *Questions of Consciousness* ASA Monographs 33. London. Routledge

Cole, Robert, E. 1971. *Japanese Blue Collar* Berkeley. University of California

Cole, Robert, E. 1972. 'Permanent Employment in Japan: Facts and Fantasies' International Labour Relations Review No. 26: 615-630.
Collin, Matthew. 1997. *Altered State: The Story of Ecstacy Culture and Acid House* London. Serpent's Tail
Conroy, H. Davis, S. Paterson, W. 1984 *Japan in Transition: Thought and Action in the Meiji Era* New York. Columbia
Craig, A.M. and Shiveley, D.H. (eds). *Personality in Japanese History* Berkeley. University of California Press
Deiterlen, G. 1973. *La Notion de la Personne en Afrique Noir* Paris. Editions du CNRS
Doi, Takeo. 1973. *The Anatomy of Dependence [Amae no Kōzō]* Tokyo. Kōdansha
Doi, Takeo. 1986. *The Anatomy of Self.* Tokyo. Kōdansha
Dore, Ronald. 1986. *Flexible Rigidities* Stanford. Stanford UP
Dore, Ronald. 1992. 'Sovereign Individuals' in Hall. J & Jarvie, I. (1992) *Transition to Modernity* Cambridge. CUP
Dumont, Louis. 1985. 'A Modified View of Our Origins: The Christian Beginings of Modern Individualism' in Carrithers, Collins, Lukes (ed)*The Category of the Person* . Cambridge. CUP
Durkheim, Emile. 1938. *The Rules Of Sociological Method* Free Press. New York
Economist Intelligence Unit (Reuters On-Line Service 21/1/96
Eisenstadt, S. and Ben-Ari, E (eds). 1990. *Japanese Models of Conflict Resolution* London. Kegan Paul International
Financial Times. 5/12/96
Foster, G. and Kemper, V. 1974. *Anthropologists in Cities* Little, Brown and Co. Boston
Fortes, Meyer. 1973. 'On the Concept of the Person Among the Tallensi' in G. Deiterlen (ed) *La Notion de la Personne en Afrique Noir.* Paris. Editions du CNRS
Gadamer, Hans-Georg. 1975. *Truth and Method* London. Sheed and Ward
Gluck, Carol. 1985. *Japan's Modern Myths: Ideology in the Late Meiji Period.* Princeton. PUP
Goffman, Erving. 1959. *The Presentation of the Self in Everyday Life* New York. Doubleday
Goodman, Roger. 1989. *Japan's International Youth* Oxford. OUP
Goodman, R. and Refsing, K. (eds) 1992. *Ideology and Practice in Modern Japan* Routledge. London
Hendry, Joy. 1993. *Understanding Japanese Society* London. Routledge
Greenfeld, Karl Taro. 1994. *Speed Tribes: Children of the Japanese Bubble.* London. Boxtree
Hall, J. et al. (eds). 1988. *Cambridge History of Japan Vol.6: The Twentieth Century'* Cambridge. CUP
Hall. J and Jarvie, I. 1992. *Transition to Modernity* Cambridge. CUP
Halpern, J. (ed) 1990. *New Japanese-English Character Dictionary* Tokyo. Kenkyusha
Hamada, Tomoko. 1980. 'Winds Of Change: Economic Realism and Japanese Labour Management' Asian Survey, Vol. XX, No. 4
Hamada, Tomoko. 1992. 'Under the Silk Banner: The Japanese Company and Its Overseas Managers' in Lebra, Takie. (ed) 1992 *Japanese Social Organization* Honolulu. Hawaii UP
Harvey, David. 1989. *The Urban Experience* Oxford. Blackwell
Harvey, David. 1990. *The Condition of Postmodernity* Oxford. Blackwell
Hasegawa, Matsuji. 1950. *Kiku to Katana* The Japanese translation of *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword* by Ruth Benedict. Tokyo. Shakai Shisō Kenkyukai Shuppan Bunkan
Hebdige, Dick. 1979. *Subcultures and the Meaning of Style* London. Routledge
Heelas, P. and Lock, A. 1982 *Indigenous Psychologies: The Anthropologiy of the Self* Academic Press. London
Heidegger Martin. 1987 (1927). *Being and Time* Blackwell. Oxford
Hendry, J and Webber, J. (eds) 1986.*Interpreting Japanese Society* JASO. Oxford
Hendry, Joy. 1992. 'Individualism and Individuality: Entry into a Social World' in Goodman, R. and Refsing, K. (eds) 1992. *Ideology and Practice in Modern Japan* Routledge. London
Hendry, Joy. 1993. *Understanding Japanese Society* London. Routledge
Hendry, Joy. 1996. 'The Chrysanthemum continues to flower: Ruth Benedict and some perils of popular anthropology' in MacClancy, J. and McDonaugh, C. (ed) 1996. *Popularizing Anthropology* London. Routledge
Hobsbawn, E. and Ranger, T. 1986. *Invented Traditions* Cambridge CUP
Hyman, Herbert. and Singer, Eleanor. (eds) 1968. *Readings in Reference Group Theory and Research* New York. Free Press

Ijiri, Kazuo. 1990. 'The Breakdown of the Japanese Work Ethic' Japan Echo Vol. XVII No. 4. Translated from *Rikuruto no mõ hitotsu no hanzai* in Shokun. October 1990. pp174-184.
Ikegami, Eiko. 1995. *The Taming of The Samurai: Honorific Individualism and the Making of Modern Japan* London. Harvard
Inoue, Tadashi. 1977. *Sekentei no kõzõ [The structure of Sekentei].* Tokyo. NHK
Irokawa, Daikichi. 1985. *The Culture of the Meiji Period* Princeton. PUP
Itoh, Makoto. 1992. 'The Japanese Model of Post-Fordism' in Storper, M. & Scott, A.J. (ed) 1992. *Pathways to Industrialization and Regional Development* London. Routledge
Itoh, Makoto. 1994. 'Is the Japanese economy in crisis?' Review of International Political Economy Vol. 1. No.1.
Itoh, Makoto. 1996. 'The Japanese Industrial Structure in Recovery: Development and Globalisation'. Paper given at the Japan Research Centre, SOAS. University of London. 2/7/96. Unpublished
Jameson, Fredric. 1991. *Postmodernism or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* London. Verso
Japan Times. 10/4/94, 16,3,95, 31/7/95.
Japan Times Weekly International Edition. April 16-22, 1990
Japan Times Weekly Overseas Edition. January 27, 1990
Kaneko, Shoji. 1997. 'Diversification of Employment Types and Changes in the Employment System' Japan Forum Vol.9 No. 2.
Kapferer, Bruce. 1995. 'From the Edge of Death: Sourcery and the Motion of Consciousness' in Cohen, Anthony, P. and Rapport, Nigel. (ed) 1995. *Questions of Consciousness* London. Routledge
Karsh, B. and Cole, R. 1968. 'Industrialisation and the Convergence Thesis' in Japan Journal of Social Issues, 24.
Keizai Kikaku Chõ. 1994. *Keizai Hakusho 1993/4. [Japanese Government Ministry of Finance. Economic White Paper 1993/4]* Tokyo. Keizai Kikaku Chõ
Kent, Pauline. 1992. 'Shame as a Social Sanction in Japan: Shameful Behaviour as Perceived by the Voting Public'. Japan Review 1992. No.3.
Kiefer, C. 1976. 'The Danchi Zoku and the Evolution of the Metropolitain Mind' in Lewis Austin (ed) *The Paradox of Progress*
Kindleburger, Charles. 1989. *Manias Crashes and Crises* London. Macmillan
Kogura, Masao. 1995. 'Nihon no kabushiki gaisha haiboku no nazo: Nihon no sabaibaru no tame no kikaku to kakushin. [The Riddle of the Defeat of the Japanese Company: A Plan for the Survival of Japanese Industry'] in *Shuukan Tõyõ Keizai 4/15/95* Tokyo. Tõyõ Keizai Shuppansha
Kondo, Dorinne. 1990. *Crafting Selves: Power, Gender and Discourses in a Japanese Workplace.* Chicago. CUP
Kondo, Dorinne. 1992. 'Multiple Selves: The Aesthetics and Politics of Artisanal Identities' in Rosenburger, N. (ed). 1992. *Japanese Sense of Self* Cambridge. CUP
Kuwayama, Takami. 1992. 'The Reference Other Orientation' in Rosenberger, N. (ed) 1992 *Japanese Sense of Self.* Cambridge. CUP
Leach, E. R. 1976 . *A Runaway World?* London. Oxford University Press
Lebra, Takie. 1976. *Japanese Patterns of Behaviour* Honolulu. Hawii UP
Lebra, Takie. 1992a. 'Self in Japanese Culture' in Rosenberger, N. (ed). 1992. *Japanese Sense of Self* Cambridge. CUP
Lebra, Takie. (ed) 1992b. *Japanese Social Organization* Honolulu. Hawaii UP
Lebra, W. and Lebra T. (eds) 1986 (1974). *Japanese Culture and Behaviour: Selected Readings* Honolulu. Hawii UP
Levine, Solomon, B. 1983. 'Careers and Mobility in Japan's Labour Market' in David, W, Plath (ed) 1983. *Work and Lifecourse in Japan* Albany. State University of New York
Lukes, S. 1985. 'Conclusion' in Carrithers, Collins, Lukes (ed) 1985 *The Category of the Person.* Cambridge. CUP
MacClancey, J. and McDonaugh, C. (eds) 1996. *Popularizing Anthropology* London. Routledge.
MacFarlane, Alan. 1993. 'On Individualism' Proceedings of the British Academy, 82.
Macpherson, C.B. 1962. 'Authority and Property: The Question of Liberal Origins' in *Virtue, Commerce and History* Cambridge. CUP
Makino, Noboru. 1995. *Zen Yosoku Asia [Complete Forecast Asia]* Tokyo. Diamond

Marsh, Robert, M. and Hiroshi Mannari. 1971. 'Lifetime commitment in Japan: Roles, Norms, and Values' American Journal of Sociology 76. 795-812.
Maskell, P and Malmberg, A. 1999. 'Localised Learning and Industrial Competitiveness'. Cambridge Journal of Economics. Vol. 23 No. 2.
Mauss, M. 1985 (1938). 'A Category of the Human Mind: The Notion of Person; The Notion of Self' in Carrithers, Collins, Lukes (ed). 1985.*The Category of the Person* Cambridge. CUP
McRobbie, Angela. 1994. *Postmodernism and Popular Culture* London. Routledge
Mead, George, Herbert. 1934. *Mind, Self, and Society* Chicago. University of Chicago
Miller, Alice. 1979. *The Drama Of Being A Child* London. Virago
Miller, Roy. 1967. *The Japanese Language* Chicago. Chicago University Press
Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Japanese Government. 1996. 'Information on Japan' http://www.jinjapan.org/
Miyamoto Masao. 1993. *Straitjacket Society* Tokyo. Kōdansha
Miyanaga, Kumiko. 1991. *The Creative Edge: Emerging Individualism in Japan* New Jersey. Transaction
Miyauchi, Yoshihiko. 1995. 'Ide yo defure faita [Deflation Fighter, Go!]' in *Shunkan Tōyō Keizai 4/15/95* Tokyo. Tōyō Keizai Shuppansha
Moeran, Brian. 1989. *Language and Popular Culture in Japan* Manchester. Manchester UP
Nakane, Chie. 1970. *Japanese Society* California. University of California
Nakane, Chie. 1974. //// in Lebra, W. and Lebra T. (eds) 1986 (1974). *Japanese Culture and Behaviour: Selected Readings* Honolulu. Hawii UP
Nakatani, I. 1984. 'The Economic Role of Financial Corporate Grouping' in Aoki, M. (ed) 1984. *The Economic Analysis of the Japanese Firm* New Holland
Nikkei Weekly.11/3/96, 30/4/96, 5/7/96,
Noguchi, Tetsuya. 1995. *Seken to wa nanika* 'What is Seken?'. Tama no Seishun. no. 5. Tama Daigaku
Nosco, Peter. (ed) 1984. *Confucianism and Tokugawa Culture* New Jersey. Princeton
Oaklander, Harold. and Whittaker, D. Hugh. 1997. 'Discussion and Conclusion' in: 'Colloquium: Fading Star or Model for Emulation? Lifetime Employment, Restructuring and Unemployment in Japan'. Japan Forum Vol.9 No.2.
OECD. Economic Reports, Japan. 1979-1989. 1993-4. OECD
Okumura, Hiroshi. 1984. *Hōjin Shihonshugi Corporate Capitalism* Tokyo. Kōbunsha
Okumura, Hiroshi. 1991. 'The Roots of the Securities Scams' Japan Echo. Vol.XVIII. No. 4. Translated from 'Hibawareta hōjin shihonshugi'. Sekai. September 1991
Okumura Hiroshi. 1992. 'Corporate Capitalism: Cracks in the System' Japan Quarterly. Jan-Mar. 1992
Pelzel, J. 1970. 'Human Nature in the Japanese Myths' in Craig, A.M. and Shiveley, D.H. (eds). *Personality in Japanese History* Berkeley. University of California Press
Plath, David, W. 1975 'Introduction' to 'From the Zabuton: A View of Personal Episodes' in Plath, D, W. (ed) Adult Episodes In Japan. Journal of Asian and African Studies (Special Edition) Vol. 10 No. 1-2
Plath, David, W. (ed) 1983. *Work and Lifecourse in Japan* Albany. State University of New York
Plath, David.W. 1989. 'Arc, Circle, and Sphere: Schedules for Selfhood' in Sugimoto, Y. and Mouer, R. (eds) 1989.*Constructs for Understanding Japan* Kegan Paul. London
Pocock J.G.A. 1985. *The Political Theory of Posessive Individualism* Oxford. OUP
Prus, Robert, C. 1996. *Symbolic Interaction and Ethnographic Research: Intersubjectivity and the Study of Human Lived Experience* Albany. State University of New York
Quinn, Charles, J. 1994. 'The terms 'uchi' and 'soto' as Windows on a World' in Bachnik, J. and Quinn, C.J. (eds). 1994. *Situated Meaning: Inside and Outside in Japanese Self, Society and Language* Princeton. PUP
Rabinow, P. and Sullivan, W. 1979*Interpretive Social Science : AReader* Berkeley. University of Calif.
Rebick, M. 1998. 'The Japanese Labour Market for University Graduates: Trends in the 1990s' Japan Forum Vol. 10. No. 1.
Reuters On-Line News Service 12/12/95, 21/1/96, 7/3/96, 29/3/96
Ricoeur, P. 1974. *The Conflict Of Interpretations: Essays in Hermeneutics* Evanston. Northwestern University Press

Rohlen, Thomas, P. 1974. *For Harmony and Strength: Japanese White-Collar Organisation in Anthropological Perspective* California. University of California
Rosenberger, Nancy. 1992. 'Introduction' to *Japanese Sense of Self* Cambridge. CUP
Rosenberger, Nancy. 1994. 'Indexing Hierarchy Through Japanese Gender Relations' in Bachnik, J. and Quinn, C.J. (eds). 1994. *Situated Meaning: Inside and Outside in Japanese Self, Society and Language* Princeton. PUP
Sakakibara, Eisuke. 1993. *Beyond Capitalism: The Japanese Model of Market Economics* Economic Strategy Institute. Maryland. University Press of America
Sakamoto Yoshikazu and Robert Ward. (ed) 1987. *Democratizing Japan: The Allied Occupation* Honolulu. Hawaii University Press
Schechner, Richard, and Appel, Willa. (ed) 1990. *By Means of Performance: Intercultural Studies of Theatre and Ritual* Cambridge. CUP
Schneewind, J.B. 'Modern Moral Philosophy' in Peter Singer (ed). 1994. *A Companion to Ethics* Oxford. Blackwell
Sengoku, Tamotsu. 1991. *Majime no Hōkai: Heisei Nihon no Wakamonotachi [The End of Seriousness: Japanese Youth in the Heisei Years]* Tokyo. Saimai Shuppansha.
Shibutani, Tamotsu. 1968. 'Reference Groups as Perspectives' in Hyman, Herbert. and Singer, Eleanor. (eds) 1968. *Readings in Reference Group Theory and Research* New York. Free Press
Shimada, Haruo. 1992. 'Japanese Capitalism: The Irony of Success' Japan Echo. Vol.XIX. No. 2. Translated from 'Japan moderu wa shinazu' Bungei Shunju. February 1992
*Shuukan Daiamondo* 'Diamond Weekly'. 1995/4/15. Tokyo. Diamond
*Shuukan Tōyō Kaizai* 'East-West Economics Weekly'. 15/4/95. Tokyo. Tōyō Kaizai Shuppansha
Singer, Peter. (ed) 1994. *A Companion to Ethics* Oxford. Blackwell
Smith, Robert, J. and Beardsley, Robert, K. 1962. *Japanese Culture: Its Development and Characteristics* Wenner-Gren Foundation. New York
Smith, Robert, J. 1983. *Japanese Society: Tradition, Self, and the Social Order* Cambridge. CUP
Storper, M. & Scott, A.J. (ed) 1992. *Pathways to Industrialization and Regional Development.* London. Routledge
Strauss, Anselm. 1959. *Masks and Mirrors* Free Press. New York
Sugimoto, Y. and Mouer, R. (1980). 'Competing Models for Understanding Japanese Society' Social Analysis. December 1980. No. 5/6.
Sugimoto, Y. and Mouer, R. (1989). *Constructs for Understanding Japan* London. Kegan Paul
Taira, K. 1962. 'The Characteristics of Japanese Labour Markets' Economic Development and Cultural Change. Vol.10, No.2.
Taira, K. 1970. *Economic Development and the Labour Market in Japan* New York. Columbia
Takeuchi, Yasuo. 1991. 'After the Bubble Bursts' Japan Echo. Vol. XVIII. No. 4.
Takeuchi, Yasuo. 1992. 'Rethinking The Economic System' Japan Echo. Vol. XIX, No. 2.
Tanaka, Naoki. 1991. 'Revealing the flaws in the Regulatory Tradition' Japan Echo. Vol.XVIII. No. 4. Translated from 'Sukandaru ga Abaita Nippon no Isei'. Gekkan Asahi. October 1991
Tsuda, M. 1965. *The Basic Structure of Japanese Labour relations* Tokyo. Society for Social Sciences, Musashi University
Tsukio, M. 1992. 'Redesigning Manufacturing for Future Generations' Japan Echo Vol. XIX No. 3. Translated from 'Sangyō no Sōzōryoku' in Chuuō Kōron. July 1992
Tsunoda,R. De Bary, W. Keene, D. 1958. *Sources of Japanese Tradition. Vols I & II* New York. Columbia
Ubukata, Yukio. 1995. 'Kigyō Kaikaku no Rienjiyaniyaringu [The Re-engineering approach to Industrial Restructuring]' in *Shuukan Tōyō Keizai 4/15/95* Tokyo. Tōyō Keizai Shuppansha
Uekusa Kazuhide. 1990. 'The Making and Breaking of a Bubble Economy'. Japan Echo. Vol. XVIII. Vol. No. 4. Translated from ' Baburu hōkaigo Nihon kaizai no yukue'. Chuo Kōron. October 1991
Ushio, Jiro. 1995. 'Kaikaku wo Oshisusumereba Nippon wa 21 Seki ni Han'ei wo Torimodoseru' 'If We Continue to Drive for Reform, We Will Return to Prosperity' in *Shuukan Tōyō Keizai 4/15/95* Tokyo. Tōyō Keizai Shuppansha
Wakabayashi, Bob Tadashi. 1986. *Anti-Foreignism and Western Learning in Early Modern Japan* Cambridge. Harvard

Weber, Max. 1978. *Economy and Society Vol. I and II.* Edited by Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich. London. University of California
Whyte, W. 1955. *Street Corner Society* Chicago. University of Chicago
Yahata, Shigemi. 1997. 'Structural Change and Employment Adjustment in the Post-Bubble Recession' Japan Forum Vol. 9 No. 2.
Yamamoto, K. 1993. 'The Lifetime Employment System Unravels'. Japan Quarterly No.4. 1993
Yoshino, K. 1992. *Cultural Nationalism in Contemporary Japan* London. Routledge

*******

# Glossary

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Ba | ば | 場 | place/frame/situation |
| Buchō | ぶちょう | 部長 | head of department |
| Bushidō | ぶしどう | 武士道 | samurai ethics |
| Giri | ぎり | 義理 | a form of endless reciprocal obligation |
| Habatsu | はばつ | 派閥 | a clique |
| Hoikuen | ほいくえん | 保育園 | a nursery school/kindergarten |
| Honne | ほんね | 本音 | honest intention/true feeling |
| Ie | いえ | 家 | a household/family unit/dwelling |
| Ikikata | いきかた | 生き方 | way of living |
| Ishi | いし | 意志 | will |
| Izakaya | いざかや | 居酒屋 | a Japanese drinking house |
| Jibun | じぶん | 自分 | the individual self/oneself |
| Jichō | じちょう | 次長 | assistant section head |
| Jimintō | じみんとう | 自民党 | Liberal Democratic Party of Japan |
| Kaisha | かいしゃ | 会社 | a company |
| Kachō | かちょう | 課長 | a section head |
| Kangaekata | かんがえかた | 考え方 | way of thinking |
| Kanrisha | かんりしゃ | 管理者 | manager/administrator |
| Keiretsu | けいれつ | 系列 | a particular grouping of companies |
| Kigyō seiri | きぎょうせいり | 企業整理 | industrial restructuring |
| Kojin | こじん | 個人 | the individual self |
| Kokoro | こころ | 心 | heart/mind/soul |
| Kūdōka | くうどうか | 空洞化 | 'hollowing out' of industry |
| Meiwaku | めいわく | 迷惑 | bother/trouble |
| Meirei shiki | めいれいしき | 命令指揮 | order of command |
| Mi | み | 身 | body and mind undifferentiated |
| Miuchi | みうち | 身内 | a circle of close relatives/friends |
| Nakama | なかま | 仲間 | a circle of close friends/colleagues |
| Omote | おもて | 表 | the front/formal |
| Omote muki | おもてむき | 表向き | facing the front/being formal |
| On | おん | 恩 | obligation |
| Ōyake | おおやけ | 公 | the public domain |
| Oshoku | おしょく | 汚職 | corruption |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Rāmen'yasan | ラーメンやさん | | Japanese noodle bar |
| Seken | せけん | 世間 | a moral space of significant others |
| Seken nami | せけんなみ | 世間並み | compliant with seken rules |
| Sekentei | せけんてい | 世間体 | the self conforming to seken rules |
| Sesshikata | せっしかた | 接し方 | way of integrating/associating |
| Shanaishitsugyō | しゃないしつぎょう | 社内失業 | 'internally' unemployed |
| Shachō | しゃちょう | 社長 | managing director/president |
| Shakai | しゃかい | 社会 | the Western concept of 'society' |
| Shikata | しかた | 仕方 | way of doing/a method |
| Shikikeiretsu | しきけいれつ | 指揮系列 | command structure |
| Shireikeitō | しれいけいとう | 指令系統 | command structure |
| Shokusekisha | しょくせきしゃ | 職責者 | manager/person of responsibility |
| Soshiki | そしき | 組織 | organisational structure |
| Soto | そと | 外 | outside (physical marker) |
| Sukyandaru | スキヤンダル | | a scandal |
| Tantōsha | たんとうしゃ | 担当者 | the person responsible/a manager |
| Tarento | タレント | | a young media star (under 21) |
| Tatemae | たてまえ | 建て前 | a system/public behaviour |
| Uchi | うち | 内 | inside (physical marker) |
| | | | One's own (social marker) |
| Ura | うら | 裏 | the rear/informal |
| Ura muki | うらむき | 裏向き | facing the rear/being informal |
| Wagamama | わがまま | | selfish |
| Wairo | わいろ | 賄賂 | bribery |
| Yudofu | ゆどうふ | 湯豆腐 | a beancurd stew |
| Zaibatsu | ざいばつ | 財閥 | a particular grouping of companies |

# Appendix

## Party Questions

Party-Goer's Questions

1) Why do you like Techno or House music?
2) Do you think there is a particular lifestyle or way of thinking associated with Techno or House music?
3) What are the differences between this lifestyle and way of thinking when compared to other lifestyles and ways of thinking?
4) Who do you go to parties with?
5) Are there people you cannot talk to about the parties?
6) Who can't you talk to? Why?
7) Please tell me about your first time at a party.
8) Would you describe a party as a 'group (*shuudan*)'? Would you say there are 'groups' at a party?
9) If there are 'groups' at parties, do these differ from other types of 'groups'? Please describe the differences in detail.
10) Are there *senpai/kōhai* type relationships at the parties or among your friends and colleagues at you place of work?
11) Do you use the word *nakama* at parties, among your friends, or at work?
12) Are there *tanin* at parties? Who exactly is *tanin*? Are there *tanin* at you place of work?
13) Do you have to take care of *sekentei* at parties?
14) Do you have to take care of *sekentei* at work or among your friends?
15) Is there anywhere you have to take care of *sekentei*?
16) Do you think of a party as a kind of *seken*?
17) If so, please describe it. If not, how is it different from *seken*?
18) Do you think of yourself as part of *seken* when you are at work? Among your friends?
19) What do you regard as *seken nami*?
20) Do you have friends who have nothing to do with your going to parties?
21) How does your lifestyle fit in with theirs'?
22) Do you think there is any kind of discrimination among the party-goers against other types of people?
23) Is there sexual discrimination at the parties? How are women at the parties treated by men, compared to other women? Do women who go to parties treat each other differently from other women?
24) Do you think the kind of lifestyle and way of thinking among the party goers will spread among other types of people?
25) What are your hopes for the future of Japan?
26) Is privacy important to you?
27) Can you give me some examples of privacy?

# Appendix

## DA Employees' Questions

1) What is your current position in DA?

2) What exactly does your job involve?

3) What positions have you held since you've been at DA?

4) Has this company been forced to restructure?

5) Would you describe DA as a 'typical' Japanese company?

6) Is working at DA different from working at other companies?

7) Please describe the command structure at DA?

8) Do you think your *shachō* is like the presidents of other companies?

9) Do you have a *buchō*? Do you have a similar relationship with your *buchō* in DA as in your previous company/ as your friends have in their companies?

10) Do you talk about DA with your wife/girlfriend/family/friends? What do they think of DA?

11) Do you have any work commitments outside work or in the evenings or weekends?

12) Do you use the term *nakama* at DA? Who exactly is *nakama*?

13) Do you have to take care of *sekentei* at DA?

14) What is *sekentei*?

15) Are you aware of *seken* at DA?

16) What is *seken nami* at DA?

17) Are there *tanin* working at DA? Who is *tanin*?

18) Do you have high school and university reunions? Do you look forward to them? What do your old friends think about your current job? Are these meetings *nakama*? Are they *seken*?

19) Do you stay in touch with colleagues from your former company?

20) Japan is often described as a nation of *shuudan shugi*. What does this mean? Do you agree with this analysis?

21) What is *kojin*?

22) What is the relationship between *kojin* and *shuudan*?

23) What is the relationship between *jibun* ad *shuudan*?

24) How has Japan changed since you were a child?

25) Are teenagers today the same as when you where a teenager? How are they the same? How are they different?

26) What would you like a Japan of the future to be like?

27) What is *giri*? Do you feel *giri* at DA?

28) Is privacy important to you?

29) Can you give me some examples of privacy?